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The Nation. November 8, 1980 $1

FALL BOOKS ISSUE

STEEL'S LIPPMANN
Peter Steinfels

STROUSE'S ALICE JAMES
Roger Rosenblatt

WOLITZER'S 'HEARTS'
Dan Wakefield

TERKEL'S 'DREAMS'
Barbara G. Harrison

KLEIN'S WOODY GUTHRIE
Morris Dickstein

SETTLE'S 'THE SCAPEGOAT'
Robert Houston

KAPLAN'S WHITMAN
Phyllis Rose

HARTMAN'S 'WILDERNESS'
Terrence Des Pres

FIVE POETS
Robert B. Shaw

NABOKOV
J. D. O'Hara

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LETTERS.

CITIZENS PARTY NOW

Ossining, N.Y.

"When will we ever learn?" as the anti-war song goes.

You urge your readers [editorial, "The Reagan Danger," Nov. 1] to stop Reagan by voting for Carter. "[A] Ronald Reagan victory increases the chances for nuclear war." Yet, a bit further on, you fear "the liberal on-again-off-again-born-again cold warrior who occupies the Oval Office seems quite capable of stumbling into an energy [read nuclear] war in the Persian Gulf by sheer incompetence." What a fine distinction you have made!

Is it less dangerous for Carter to retain the wild Zbigniew Brzezinski as his defense and foreign policy adviser, a man who (as you state) has a "preference for military solutions to political problems"?

Is Carter's recent change in nuclear deterrence strategy less dangerous with his "promulgation (to counter Reagan) of a 'limited' nuclear war strategy in Presidential Directive 59" (a first-strike strategy if ever there was one, aiming to destroy the Soviet weapons, not the cities)? Or his acceptance of counter-force strategy in placing nuclear weapons in Europe?

Parenthetically, you state that Carter changed policies to "counter" Reagan. Isn't it clear that a Carter elected to a second term would have fewer restraints imposed on him than a Carter running for re-election?

You say you don't want to use the "lesser evil" argument, but how can you not in the face of past history? Truman was less dangerous than Dewey . . . Johnson was less dangerous than Goldwater . . . Carter was less dangerous than Ford . . . and now the same old horse manure in 1980.

And yet you have the foresight to "recognize that the choices next time around [1984] are not likely to be much better unless and until those dissatisfied with mainstream politics organize to do something about it." Correct. Isn't that what the Citizens Party is doing right now, in 1980?

The Nation, by not recommending a clear-cut vote for Barry Commoner of the Citizens Party, isn't very helpful. You are hindering the growth and development of the Citizens Party, which, as you state, is building for the future and hopes to play a decisive role in national, state and local politics, in its efforts to restructure our deteriorating social order.

Truly, when will we ever learn?

Don Schoolman

COMPUTRON TECHNOLOGIES OBJECTS

New York City

I represent Computron Technologies Corporation, and I am writing to you with regard to the article "The Strange Odyssey of Lyndon LaRouche" by Frank Donner and Randall Rothenberg, which appeared in your August 16-23 issue. In that article, in the context of characterizing Mr. LaRouche and his associates as, variously, Communist, Nazi, paranoid, violent and affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan, you state:

> And Lyndon LaRouche *is* the U.S.L.P. A management consultant and head of a successful computer software service called Computron, LaRouche was a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party from 1948 to 1966. [Emphasis in original.]

This is a patent falsehood insofar as it concerns Computron. Mr. LaRouche is not the "head" of Computron, nor is he an officer, director, or stockholder of Computron, an employee of Computron, a consultant to or independent contractor used by Computron, or in any other way whatsoever associated with Computron. Your false, reckless, malicious and gratuitous act in dragging my client's business into your vituperative article, an article having nothing to do with my client or its business, has cost and will cost my client substantial damages. I therefore demand that you fully retract this falsehood in a manner as conspicuous as your publication of it.

David S. Heller

THE AUTHORS REPLY

New York City

David Heller's claim that Lyndon LaRouche has never had any formal connection with Computron may well be true. But as a private company, information as to its internal affairs is not easily available. In our article, we refer to the use of libel suits and the threats of such suits as a familiar *modus operandi* of LaRouche and his Labor Party. Heller's letter seems further confirmation of this practice, particularly since the August 14, 1979, issue of the party's biweekly paper, *New Solidarity*, has identified him as the U.S. Labor Party's attorney.

Frank Donner
Randall Rothenberg

MORE ON LAROUCHE: A SERIOUS THREAT

Chicago

We were pleased to see the progressive movement finally taking seriously the threat posed by the followers of Lyndon LaRouche. Since we first published "NCLC: Brownshirts of the Seventies" in 1976, the National Caucus of Labor Committees/U.S. Labor Party has continued to expand its financial base. Internal files recently obtained from U.S.L.P. offices show that between August 1979 and 1980 the group increased its weekly income (primarily from publication sales) from roughly $13,000 per week to more than $60,000 per week.

Now, in an effort to escape his own sordid history, LaRouche has dropped the names National Caucus of Labor Committees and U.S. Labor Party from his public vocabulary. He is now operating through old front groups such as the Fusion Energy Foundation and National Anti-Drug Coalition, and in the past month has launched two new front groups: the National Democratic Policy Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee for a New Africa Policy. LaRouche poses a real threat to progressives since he has recently stepped up his spying on social-change activists and publishes his "intelligence" to public and private security agencies through a newsletter called "Investigative Leads."

We would appreciate receiving any clippings, leaflets or information concerning the LaRouche cult to continue our research, and assistance in preparing articles like the one appearing in *The Nation*. Our address is: Public Eye Network, c/o National Lawyers Guild, #918, 343 Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604.

Chip Berlet

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EDITORIALS.

The Center's Hold

The sorriest spectacle in the recent Presidential campaign may not have been the quadrennial crowding of the "middle of the road"—that was to be expected—but the persistent inability of the mainstream media to recognize or understand what traffic there was in the right and left lanes. Much of the distortion concerned the rise of an allegedly "new" right—despite the fact that the right has always been with us and has risen at least once every decade or so.

The left, however, did not escape distortion. A revealing expression of centrist attitudes was offered on the Op-Ed page of *The Washington Post* during the primaries by R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., editor of *The American Spectator*. According to Tyrrell, "the Citizens Party is about as far to the left as the Birch Society is to the right, and to read its party platform is to read the howls of *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, and *Mother Jones* simultaneously."

Tyrrell's inability to distinguish among our various howls is disappointing, but more disturbing is the popular misconception of the left that he unwittingly reflects. Not only is the fledgling Citizens Party denounced as a danger to the Republic (though Tyrrell neglects to note that its initials are, ominously, "C.P.") but he also parades by the "Massachusetts Messiah," the "Hon. Brown" and "Parson Anderson" as paragons of "that gallimaufry of environmentalists, consumerists, antinuclear activists and personal liberationists" who constitute "our bizarre left." Believe it or not, even Jimmy Carter is included—because of his "McGovernism" in foreign policy!

Now whatever may be said of the merits of Messrs. Kennedy, Brown, Anderson and Carter, being on the left is most assuredly not one of them. Indeed, what is most striking about Tyrrell's tirade is not the Menckenian perversity that it strains to affect but the very typicality of its notion that anyone to the left of Senator Henry Jackson is a flaming radical.

This common misperception is no doubt due in part to the incoherence and disorganization of what there is of a real left in this country. But it also derives in no small part from the narrow range of opinion that is allowed to filter through

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the media on a regular basis. Are we being conspiratorial? Where, then, are the left-wing columnists and commentators? Can their near absence from the airwaves and the editorial pages of our major newspapers really be attributed to a lack of literacy on the left?

The Op-Ed page of *The Post* is typical. Its idea of diversity runs the ideological gamut from Tyrrell on the right (or is Joseph Sobran even further to the right?) through the nonpartisan conservatives (Evans and Novak, George Will—or is Will a card-carrying Republican?) all the way over to a conservative Democrat (Joseph Kraft) on the "left."

According to Tyrrell, the American voter "has grown deaf to the sirens and unguents of the American left." Perhaps in a future installment he will tell us how it is possible to grow deaf to an unguent (short of stuffing salve in your ear), but it should not be surprising that even some otherwise sensible people regard the perspective of *The Progressive* or *The Nation* as not only unsettling but virtually subversive. A steady diet of *The Post*'s version of diversity does establish subtle limits of acceptable opinion.

During the Vietnam War the networks often broadcast discussions between liberals who favored less bombing and conservatives who favored more, just as now the debate is between liberals who want more defense spending and conservatives who want much more—as though these were and are the total range of responsible choice. Ending that war required a mighty chorus of "howls" and "sirens" from the sidelines of respectability, not to mention the activities of citizens Tyrrell dismisses as "professional demonstrators." The emergence of a new cold-war consensus suggests that, Tyrrell's trumpeting to the contrary notwithstanding, howls and sirens are still very much in order.

Warring Factions

Teheran

The war being waged by Iraq against Iran is provoking a radical change in the politics of the Islamic revolution in Iran, changes that the American press has ignored because of its absorption with the hostage drama. For the first time since February 1979, when the remnants of the Pahlevi regime were wiped out by the people in Teheran, the army is emerging as a major political force in the country. In spite of twenty months of revolution, the Iranian Army, a creation of the Shah and of the United States, has been able to preserve the core of its military and political power.

Preparations for war with Iraq began at least six months before the invasion, and Iran's divisions were well placed, both on the southern front in Khuzistan and on the western front in Ilam and Kermanshah Provinces. When the war commenced in the third week of September, the Iranians, far from being surprised, were quite ready to resist, contrary to the predictions of many Western observers, who believed that the Iranian Army had lost its ability to fight and was crippled by equipment shortages because of the U.S. boycott following the seizure of the hostages.

However, this was only true as far as sophisticated armaments, such as F-14 fighters and missiles, were concerned. The bulk of the Iranian equipment (the tanks, artillery and old-fashioned jets) has been kept running without major problems. Iraq met a still fairly strong classical, if rusty, army that was quite capable of fighting in the war's first month.

During the first week of the war, the competing political parties in Teheran were forced to realize that the regular army, by virtue of its credible performance on the battlefield, could become a major political force in its own right. For the first time since the revolution the soldiers had become popular figures; the people, especially the middle class, regarded them in a new light. Daily, Iranian television showed pictures of war heroes, pilots and officers, and the Army Chief of Staff in Khuzistan felt confident enough to issue instructions directly to the population, something that would have been unthinkable ten days before. The army's refurbished image is generally seen to have also enhanced President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr's ability to maneuver against his powerful clerical opponents on the right.

But as "referee" of Iranian politics, Ayatollah Khomeini listens to voices other than Bani-Sadr's—among them, Prime Minister Ali Radjai and leaders of the Islamic Republican Party (I.R.P.), headed by Ayatollah Behesti. For the latter, the rise of the army and the comeback of Bani-Sadr as Chief of the Army Staff is a direct threat. "In the long run," says a prominent member of the I.R.P., "the army, which has not changed basically since the days of the Shah, might be a candidate for supreme power. We will never accept such an evolution, which would jeopardize the entire revolutionary process."

The I.R.P. also sought to keep the direction of the war under its control. Thus, a defense council was authorized by Khomeini, and several members of the I.R.P. (Ayatollah Behesti, Ayatollah Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Chief of Staff of Khuzistan Mostafa Tchamran and Prime Minister Radjai) were appointed to it, along with Bani-Sadr and the military chiefs. The council is empowered to direct the entire war effort and is the sole authority entitled to speak in the name of the Iranian nation. Bani-Sadr reportedly agreed to the formation of the defense council in the hope that he could dominate it and use it to assert his and the regular army's control over the cleric-dominated revolutionary guards (*pasdars*). But since Khomeini agreed to heavy I.R.P. representation in the council, it may well be used to neutralize the army and Bani-Sadr. The I.R.P. has since taken the lead in a campaign to mobilize mass citizen support in the struggle against Iraqi aggression.

The aim of the I.R.P.'s campaign is to strengthen the

AWARD TO LERNOUX

Penny Lernoux, *The Nation*'s Latin American correspondent, has been awarded a Maria Moors Cabot prize for "distinguished journalistic contributions to the advancement of inter-American understanding."

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army but prevent it from taking the entire credit for defending the country. Wherever possible, the *pasdars* and the militias (favored by the I.R.P.) have been fighting side by side with the soldiers, and their participation was played up in Government propaganda, which is still controlled by the I.R.P. "Our real strength," says Tchamran, "doesn't lie in the army but in the people and in our Islamic revolution." Defending the revolution has pushed the I.R.P. into closer ties with the Communist Tudeh Party. Several "heroes" killed on the front received public homage from the Islamic authorities despite their Tudeh membership.

Neither the I.R.P. nor Bani-Sadr has an interest in ending the war until a clear victory has been achieved against Iraq; for the I.R.P., the war must shift from a simple national conflict, based on frontier disagreements, to a real national liberation struggle, a holy war of Islam.

As long as local resistance in Khuzistan holds the Iraqis back, whatever the casualties, Iran's tactics make sense, but if Iran suffers any important setbacks, the political costs will be paid by the I.R.P. and then an entirely new set of forces could come into play. The Mujahideen, for example, the Islamic socialist guerrilla organization, which had an armed militia numbering 10,000 before it was driven underground by the army and the I.R.P., could play a prominent role in the defense of the endangered revolution in Iran.

PHILIPPE FLANDRIN

Philippe Flandrin, a foreign editor of La Croix, *an afternoon daily newspaper in Paris, recently returned from a visit to Teheran.*

Rate-the-Debate

Pundits who have been telling us all along to expect an "October surprise" were right, but it turned out, not too surprisingly, to be a media event. On not-so-Great Debate night, October 28, the latest Orwellian conquest belonged, appropriately, to the public-opinion industry. Those unhappy many who watched ABC News's coverage of the Carter-Reagan match were treated to a new experiment in pseudopolitics: a telephone "poll." The question: who won?

Viewers were invited to participate in this grandiose rating game through the miracle of the Dial-It system, a recent innovation of the Bell System. Subscribers to the service—newspapers, television stations—pay $5,000 monthly, and their viewers or readers can call the "900" numbers to obtain sports scores or to participate in straw polls. A.T.&T. makes its profits from the price it charges per call. And so, on October 28, the Dial-It numbers were flashed on the screen before and after the debate and throughout ABC's *Nightline* program. Viewers had the choice of dialing one of two numbers, to register a preference for Carter or Reagan. A.T.&T. charged them a 50-cent-a-call poll tax for exercising their telephone franchise.

The debate itself had given us unchecked fact flung against unanswered question, meaningless statistics piled as high as the evasions they were meant to cover. Now America could reach out and touch itself. Viewers could watch themselves rating the debaters' performances as the numbers piled up into the hundreds of thousands. As it turned out, Reagan retained an amazing two-to-one lead all night. The final tally: 469,412 for Reagan and 227,017 for Carter. There were glitches, of course, all reported with due sonority. Southeastern callers who dialed the Reagan number to "vote" got a recording thanking them for voting for Carter, and vice versa. (An A.T.&T. employee explained that the tapes got mixed up; the callers' preferences were correctly recorded.) Correspondent Ted Koppel kept reminding *Nightline* viewers that the "poll" was "unscientific"—the callers being, in technical terms, a self-selected sample—and in the next breath, saying that it was "enormous," "much bigger than expected."

Late in the show, to his credit, *The New York Times*'s Tom Wicker aptly recalled the flaws in the *Literary Digest* telephone poll that predicted an Alf Landon victory in 1936. The magazine's pollsters had not caught on that phone owners were likely to be wealthier, therefore Republican, a flaw that could equally obtain in 1980. Moreover, in ABC's psephological extravaganza, urban dwellers were more likely to get busy signals; Republican fanatics might have "voted" more than once, and the Democratic poor were less likely to spend 50 cents on the new toy. All of which added up to reasons why this "unscientific" but "enormous" video game would tilt Republican.

But bias or no, the damage is done. Robert Karl Manoff, managing editor of *Soho News*, has pointed out the enormous power that polls acquire when politics is largely image-making. There has been much comment on how the 1980 campaign has been reported as a horse race. A study by Michael Robinson, published in the American Enterprise Institute's *Public Opinion* during the summer, counted three times as many stories about the horse race of the primaries (who's ahead? who has the big Mo? who do you think is ahead? is he gaining?) as about what are so quaintly called these days, in a tone usually reserved for endangered species, "issues." Reporters become handicappers: Reagan's been in a lot of races and he knows how to get out in front; Carter's looking good in the stretch. Politics has long since become spectacle. Now Roone Arledge's ABC News and Sports brings us a new pseudo-democratic wrinkle. *Everyone* is invited to place a bet at the 50-cent window. This is not *vox populi*; it is the voice in which the media world flatters a nation of gamblers.

But perhaps the new honesty is the best policy. Since our political fate is being organized as a spectacular (will we soon be seeing Roman numerals for Campaign LXXX?), it seems right to regale the fans with news of their own scores. What do you say, sports fans?

TODD GITLIN

Todd Gitlin teaches sociology at the University of California, Berkeley; his latest book is The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left *(University of California Press).*

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VARIATIONS

CALVIN TRILLIN

"Am I the only one worried about how unhealthy the people who work in health food stores look?" I said to my wife one day. I described, in some detail, a clerk I had just encountered in a health food store—his sunken chest, his quivering hands, his ominous pallor, the dun-colored tint to his wretched little wispy beard.

"Calm down," my wife said.

"Why isn't there a Whole Grain Defense Committee working to put some meat on their bones?" I said. "I'm beginning to think those syndicated kvetches are right about how uncaring Americans have become. Dozens of customers a day must walk right by this quasi cadaver and not one of them is willing to get involved even to the extent of calling 911."

"What were you doing in a health food store anyway?" my wife asked. "You're always saying that health food makes you sick."

"I was on a mission of mercy," I said. "A friend of mine who lives in a place that lacks the shopping resources of this great city had run out of soy waste."

"You know very well there's no such thing as soy waste," she said. "Why do you keep going on about soy waste?"

"Soy waste, granola dust, pure extract of balsa wood—what's the difference what they call it?" I said. "Judging from the condition of the clerk, it obviously isn't enough to keep a human being alive."

It happens to be true that health food makes me sick. In fact, health food stores make me feel a bit queasy even if I don't buy anything—partly, I think, because they always smell like capsules that have been in the medicine chest since the Nixon-Humphrey campaign.

"The children said you made a scene in the store," my wife said.

"Not a scene, really," I said. It is true that, as I poked around the aisles looking for the soy waste, I suddenly heard myself shout, "Help! I'm trapped in a bottle of Coricidin!" That isn't really a scene though. I think of it as more of an outburst.

"I think you're becoming a crank," my wife said.

"This is pure science we're talking about here," I said. "If bumblebee leavings and stump paste are so good for you, why can't any of those guys grow full beards? Isn't there some public health law against people who are shopping for food being reminded constantly of the last days of Howard Hughes? These health food store people look even less healthy than runners."

"What do runners have to do with this?" my wife asked.

"Plenty," I said. "I'm glad you brought it up. Did you get a look at those guys who ran in the New York Marathon? They look like they make their living as male models for refugee relief ads: 'You can either send this lunatic a Mars bar or you can turn the page.' "

"I see now that this is not crankiness," my wife said.

"Support from home is always welcome," I said. "Even if it comes a bit late."

"What it is," she went on, "is a devious attempt to justify a style of life that is based on sausage-eating and sloth."

"Which reminds me," I said. "Am I the only person who favors a law mandating life imprisonment for anyone who performs in public as a mime? Where is everybody else on these issues?"

"Don't try to change the subject," she said.

"Who's changing the subject? I've been talking about this for years." It happens to be true that it has been several years since I pointed out to my wife that everybody in the world—way down deep—has a response to mimes that is reflected in the Woody Allen line about watching a mime who was "either blowing glass or tattooing the student body of Northwestern University." Certainly, my early commitment to the cause was demonstrated to anyone's satisfaction in 1978 when I attempted to place some mimes who were performing in Sheridan Square under citizen's arrest.

"Picking on mimes has—"

"I hope you're not going to drag out that tiresome business about the First Amendment," I said. "It is perfectly obvious that the right of free speech has been waived, de facto, by people who have a policy of not saying anything."

"I gather from this conversation that you suspect I might have discovered the gumbo with andouille sausage you smuggled in from Louisiana and hid in the freezer," my wife said.

"And speaking of border crossings," I said. "Who is it in the State Department who persists in granting visas to Marcel Marceau—a man who advertises in the newspaper that he intends to commit middlebrow felonies all over the country?"

"You're simply going to have to control your eating," she said. "I promised your mother I would—"

"I suppose you're going to bring up the fact that October 26 was Mother-in-Laws' Day," I said. "A testimony to the imagination of the American cut-flowers industry. I assume they'll be having Landlords' Day next—some date at the end of a cold month, when most evictions occur. Then Life Insurance Salesmen's Day."

"Also, a little exercise wouldn't do you any harm."

"Customs Inspectors' Day," I said. "Then a day for sending posies to the hard-working folks who dun you for your Diners Club bill."

"I think you should throw out the gumbo right now," my wife said.

"Am I the only one who thinks foreign movies are for sissies or are the others just not saying?" I said.

"I take back what I said about crankiness," my wife said.

"Thank you."

"You are, in fact, a crank," she said. "A sausage-eating, slothful crank."

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

'Shakespeare in Overalls'

MORRIS DICKSTEIN

WOODY GUTHRIE: A LIFE. *By Joe Klein. Alfred A. Knopf. 476 pp. $15.95.*

Woody Guthrie is such a figure in American legend that it's hard to believe a man like him really existed. "This Land Is Your Land," his most famous song, became too much of an alternate national anthem to seem like one man's composition. He wrote more than a thousand other songs, but his many recordings sold very few copies. He was a cool, often monotonous singer and only a fair musician. But the melodic and verbal flow invariably holds us, and on the stage he could be mesmerizing, with a mellifluous speaking voice that set off his singing. He didn't read music and rarely made up his own tunes, usually adapting his words to songs that already existed, continually modifying both till he was satisfied with the match, never singing a song the same way twice. Sometimes it's hard to tell where the old songs break off and Woody Guthrie begins; his most original pieces often sound like traditional folk songs, while songs his mother taught him can sound like his own. As his songs have become familiar to us in the performances of others, Woody Guthrie has faded into his work. He has become a sort of disembodied folk spirit. Only his legend insists that there actually was such a man.

The Guthrie legend began with the life he lived and the wonderful stories he told about it—like many a legend he seemed to make himself up as he went along—but it was his long period of disease and disintegration that enabled it to take hold. During the great folk revival of the early 1960s, the guitar-strumming kids who popped up in every town, every city park, every school and at every political demonstration were already being called "Woody's children." But all that was left of Woody himself were the stories; like a living ghost, a posthumous presence, he was wasting away with a hereditary brain disease till he died in 1967.

The folk revival, like the new protest politics which centered on civil rights and nuclear testing, was in many ways a return to the spirit of the 1930s; a sick Woody Guthrie was transformed into an icon and a shrine to the mythology of the Depression. Woody became the last of the Okies—drifter, troubadour, protester, avatar of the counterculture. By the 1970s we were ready for Hal Ashby's lovingly poetic film adaptation of Woody's 1943 autobiography, *Bound for Glory*. If the success of the book had been the first phase of Woody's canonization, the last stage was this reverent movie, with its visual allusions to John Ford's version of *The Grapes of Wrath*. The movie confined itself to the few years of his wanderings in the 1930s: Woody the loner, Woody the drifter. That was the myth. With Woody dead, this story of his life could finally displace his work: the myth could supersede the music. By then we were all Woody's children.

Into this picture now comes a gifted young writer, Joe Klein, with no special investment in the 1930s, the folk culture, or the Woody Guthrie legend. He tells the whole story for the first time; and, of course, the truth turns out to be far more fascinating than the myth. Separating fact from fancy, *Woody Guthrie: A Life* is a gripping and illuminating book, one of the most engaging biographies I have read in years. It can be disconcerting to learn that Woody hated riding boxcars and took trains only as a last resort, or that this great Westerner, who first went on radio singing cowboy songs, could barely ride a horse. Discarding the icon, the book discovers the man. It reads like a novel but is based on impressive research into subjects as diverse as Woody's Oklahoma and Texas background, the history of country music, the cultural policies of the Communist Party and the medical history of Huntington's disease. Klein tracked down

DRAWINGS BY ED KOREN

Morris Dickstein teaches English at Queens College and is currently a visiting professor of American studies at the University of Paris VIII. He is the author of a book on the 1960s, Gates of Eden *(Basic Books).*

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ancient relatives all over the country who described events that occurred sixty and seventy years ago; he gained the confidence of all three of Woody's wives and that of many survivors of the 1940s left-wing folk scene who were later blacklisted and browbeaten into a long period of enforced silence.

Thanks to these informants as well as his own good digging and intuition, he tells us more than any recent book about a great undocumented subject—the "progressive" culture created by the popular front, a culture of songs and books, nurseries and summer camps, radio shows and newspapers. Some of this was agitprop activity of an ephemeral kind—the handmaiden of union organizing and political indoctrination. But like the communal structures that still exist within some of the European Communist parties (in Italy, for example), it was also a complete way of life, an interwoven texture of private passions, deep-seated assumptions, social relationships and supportive institutions. What this Old Left culture produced in the arts was often lacking in craft and imagination, but Woody Guthrie was an exception—its finest flower, its natural man, its "Shakespeare in overalls."

Woody Guthrie was a Communist, a fact which was not convenient for any of the versions of the Guthrie legend. The Oklahoma where he grew up had been a hotbed of socialist activity before the debacle of World War I. His own father, a local Democratic politician and journalist, had tried to make a reputation by smearing socialists with charges of advocating free love and sexual immorality. But the ferment of politics and even the conditions of the Depression made little impact on Woody until he hit the road in the mid-1930s to escape the dry Southwestern towns where his family's fortunes had long been disintegrating. Drifting around, trying desperately to stay unattached, he stumbled into an attachment he hadn't expected.

As he picked up tunes and sang for the men in the boxcars, says Klein,

> Woody was amazed at the impact the songs had. Sometimes grown men would get all misty-eyed when he sang them, and their voices would catch when they tried to sing along. The whiny old ballads his mother had taught him were a bond that all country people shared; and now, for the migrants, the songs were all that was left of the land. . . . It wasn't just entertainment; he was performing their past. . . . An odd thought began to percolate. *He* was one of *them*. The collapse of his family wasn't all that unique; these people had seen hard times too. . . . Woody had never considered himself part of any group before. But here he was, an Okie, and these were his people.

This was the same message of mutual recognition and solidarity that Steinbeck worked into *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel Woody admired so much he improved on it by condensing the plot into "Tom Joad," a seventeen-stanza ballad. Yet as a loner by temperament he himself could not fully take it to heart. Woody had an itch to travel, to break away, especially when wives, children and work were tying him down. He wrote that "the worst thing that can happen to you is to cut yourself loose from the people," but cutting loose from individual people was something he did all the time. None of his wives ever knew when he would pick up and take off, or send for them from across the country. What he meant was not people but "the people," that great 1930s myth of the Common Man, the salt of the earth. In Woody Guthrie—with folk music as his medium—this abstract common man found a perfect spokesman.

Woody became a Communist gradually, more out of an instinctive populism than from any ideological conversion. He cared little for theory or orthodoxy but cared a great deal about social injustice. He rarely tried to versify the party line; he worked instead from the life he knew and the books he devoured. This was a time when the Communists themselves had just discovered "the people," and Woody Guthrie seemed like the genuine article. He broke into radio in 1937 on a left-wing station in Los Angeles and quickly became a local celebrity, as he would again when he arrived in New York City in 1940. Soon he was receiving a thousand letters a month and crisscrossing California to sing at union meetings and radical campaign rallies.

But Woody never did develop much political sense. A streak of perverseness caused him to draw even closer to the Communists after the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, just when so many others were abandoning ship. In New York he became a regular columnist for *The Daily Worker* and vaguely supported the twists and turns of party policy. When people criticized Stalin, he wrote to his

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wife that "the whole world cannot trick Joseph Stalin because he is too scientific for them." He stuck with the party after the fall of Earl Browder in 1945, which signaled the end of the popular front, because, he said, "I owe them . . . the only guidance and recognition and pay that I've ever tasted." But his endless flow of protest songs came from the gut rather than from any calculated strategy. The Communists were right: Woody was the real thing.

By the mid-1940s, says Klein, folk music had become "part of the ceremonial trappings for any self-respecting Communist meeting." But Woody's range extended far beyond protest music. His first and greatest sequence of songs, the *Dust Bowl Ballads*, is as much a 1930s evocation of the open road and a hymn to the indomitability of man as it is a piece of social criticism. The road means forced migration in Woody's songs, but it also means freedom—a refusal to be hemmed in or regimented. The point of view of the ordinary Joe, which had eluded proletarian fiction and socialist realism, wells up in his songs like a clear spring. ("It takes a ten dollar shoe to fit my feet," goes one song. "Your two dollar shoe hurts my feet, an' I ain't gonna be treated this a way.") In both his ballads and his fine talking blues numbers—as in bits and pieces of his prose—he could be a great storyteller. His songs are never nasty: even when etched in bitterness they remain lyrical and singable, with refrains so simple and direct they are impossible to forget.

In writing songs Woody was infinitely adaptable. He could turn hillbilly music into urban songs about union struggles. His "Union Maid," with its rousing refrain, "Oh you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union," became an anthem of the labor movement, a challenge to all the thugs and scabs and company spies who still tried to keep workers from organizing. Woody researched other songs from history, especially the history of the labor wars, and many others he developed out of little stories in the newspapers.

Woody never tried rhyming the telephone directory but could even make electrification sound heroic, as he did in some twenty-six songs he wrote in a single month in 1941 while on the payroll of the Bonneville Power Administration in Oregon. The subject was an improbable one but it galvanized his imagination; these were paeans to technology which also eulogized nature in the shape of the river and celebrated the ingenuity of man as embodied in the dam. One of the best of them, "Pastures of Plenty," ends with an unusual touch of overt patriotism:

> Well, it's always we ramble, that river and I,
> Along your green valley I'll work till I die,
> My land I'll defend with my life, if it be,
> 'Cause my pastures of plenty must always be free.

But Woody also puzzled his radical friends by writing many songs for children that sounded simplistic or nonsensical to those who had never observed a child closely. And many other songs he sang eschew social issues for the eternal ache of man and woman which is close to the essence of folk music. "The music was usually an afterthought," Klein says. "The words were most important. He wrote his songs at the typewriter. It was the instrument he played best."

Typing was a medium of free association for Woody: all his life he was literally drunk with words. With little schooling, he had an amazing natural gift for evocative writing, abetted by the compulsive reading habits of an autodi-

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dact. "An explosion was coming in Woody's life," says Klein of the period just before he first left the Texas Panhandle in 1936. "For five years he had been sucking in knowledge like a vacuum cleaner, and now he had to let it out in some way or go crazy." Woody's best stories, embroidered halfway into fiction, were about the parched, blighted Dust Bowl towns he left behind. Along with Steinbeck and documentary film makers and photographers like Pare Lorentz, Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, Woody helped create our image of rural America during the Depression, which was fixed forever by John Ford's celebrated movie.

Propelled by the national crisis, sometimes even employed by the New Deal administration, artists in every medium set out to rediscover the essence of America. In the 1890s, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner had written about the closing of the frontier, but in the 1930s the vast expanse of the American continent became a new frontier, both for once-settled migrants in search of a livelihood and once-alienated artists in search of America. The horizontal extensions of physical space became for the American imagination what the hierarchical constraints of social space were for the European: a challenge, an incitement, a field of conflict and conquest. When the Beats in the late 1950s revived the road novel and wrote Whitmanesque poems to America, they were reviving a dormant 1930s tradition and giving it a sardonic modern twist. E. L. Doctorow's *Loon Lake* is but another recent example, a road novel actually set in the 1930s.

When Woody Guthrie came to New York City at the beginning of 1940, this populist fascination with the American heartland was still strong. This was true especially in "progressive" circles—which included many second-generation American Jews who genuinely saw Communism as the fulfillment of American democratic values—and among folklorists like Alan Lomax of the Library of Congress, Charles Seeger, an ethnomusicologist, and his gifted 20-year-old son Peter, a Harvard dropout. On February 23—the day I was born—Woody dashed off "This Land" as an angry response to the egregious patriotic rhetoric of Irving Berlin's "God Bless America." During his first year in New York he was lionized as a combination of Caliban, the noble savage, and Joe

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Hill, the proletarian saint.

Woody seemed nonchalant in the face of all this adulation, but a flood of creative energy poured out of him. Everything he knew and felt soon welled up to the surface. He did marathon recording sessions for the archives of the Library of Congress as Lomax debriefed him of hundreds of songs and stories and encouraged him to sit down and write. For the next three or four years the world was his oyster, though that world only occasionally extended beyond the confines of the Old Left and the new young folk culture that idolized him.

Woody would sing anywhere—he claims he did more than 100 shows in his first few months in the city—but the songs he recorded were too plain to be popular, the commercial market for folk music was nonexistent and he was constantly on guard against the slick influences of Tin Pan Alley. Instead, with Pete Seeger, Millard Lampell, Lee Hays and others, he helped form a group called the Almanac Singers, which practiced both a communal life style and endless, often naïve, radical agitation. (They went from peace songs to labor songs to war songs in rapid succession.) According to Klein, everyone in the group "cowered before Woody. He was the group's inspiration, the moral leader, the old master . . . and he never let anyone forget it. He was forever intimidating others with his political and musical rectitude and his Oklahoma credentials. . . . Woody, the dust bowl refugee, was the group's repository of proletarian wisdom, the ultimate arbiter of taste."

While Pete Seeger tried, without much luck, to bring some order to the group's bookings and housekeeping, Woody used his influence to insist on musical standards and to combat the group's propensity for naked propaganda. Eventually the Almanac Singers drifted apart, to be reincarnated a decade later (minus Woody, and minus much of the political bite) as the Weavers, the first group to put folk music on the national charts and make it pay. Songs like Leadbelly's "Irene" and Woody's dust-storm ballad, "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You," were adapted into smooth popular hits, with most of the grit and dust removed. But the Weavers themselves soon fell victim to the blacklist, which drove the remnants of the folk culture and the popular front into virtual hiding or exile.

By this time Woody had begun to behave erratically and had long since lost his creative flow. Some of his behavior was caused not by alcohol as everyone assumed but by the early stages of Huntington's disease, which had first deranged and then killed his mother and would eventually strike at least two of his children. But in other respects Woody's career in the 1940s reads like a classic case of the inability of youthful genius to deal with sudden and spectacular recognition—to say nothing of the first signs of middle age and waning powers. Though Woody's verbal and musical sensibility, unlike his politics, was far from naïve, everyone who knew him agrees that there was something childlike and innocent about him. He had what Schiller describes, in his essay "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry," as a spontaneous rather than a self-conscious imagination; this helped make him so prolific. In his life this came out in his affinity for children, in his lifelong refusal to shoulder responsibility and in the way he brought out the impulse in women to mother him and take care of him. His second wife, Marjorie, a former Martha Graham dancer, continued to do this even after they were divorced, and remains to this day the devoted keeper of the flame.

After the success of *Bound for Glory*, Woody set off on dozens of literary projects, none of which really satisfied him. With his astonishing fluency he could dash off half a novel only to discard it and turn to something else. He thought nothing of writing fifty-page single-spaced letters. Once, miserably trapped on an Army base at the end of the war, he sent Marjorie six letters in a single day. To write this biography, Klein, with Marjorie Guthrie's cooperation, has gone through a mountain of unpublished papers and letters, and he is able to trace Woody's melancholy descent into uncontrollable logorrhea in the last few years when he could still write.

Gradually, what had begun as an exuberant gift of free association dissolved into surreal incoherence. This obsession manifested itself most strangely in Woody's growing addiction to pornographic letter writing, not only to his wife but to women he never met or barely knew. Eventually one of them complained to the law and he was charged with sending obscene materials through the mails; when he refused to appear contrite before the judge, he was clapped in jail.

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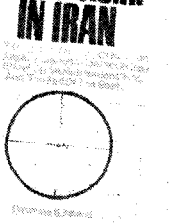

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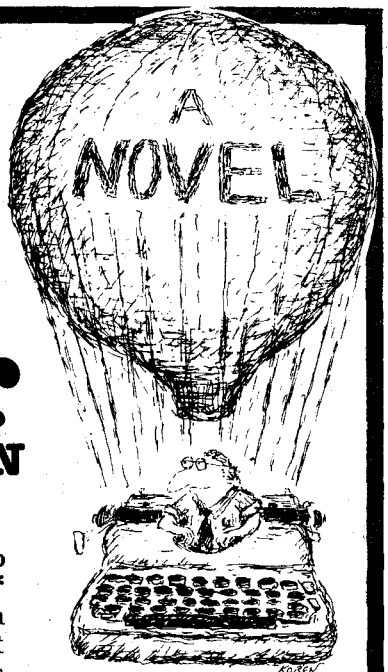

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Woody had long preached the open and natural acceptance of the human body. But as he felt his sexual powers beginning to decline, he became the literary equivalent of a flasher, and began to use verbal discharge as an incitement or substitute for other kinds of ejaculation. In an eerie illustration of what Jacques Derrida has called "the primal scene of writing," he told his wife not be be afraid that his "love juices" were "dripping down onto pages of letters to any other girl." As writing of every sort became more compulsive and less rational for him, his work became a wild parody of the brilliant fluency of his earlier years—much as the constant, random physical movements of Huntington's disease burlesqued his earlier energies.

One fresh and haunting element in Joe Klein's picture is his unflinching portrayal of Woody Guthrie's years of dissolution, starting from the late 1940s, which played their role in his eventual elevation from martyrdom to sainthood. The pattern of Woody's life reminds me strongly of his contemporary who was also recently the subject of a revealing biography, Delmore Schwartz, whose dates (1913-66) are almost the same as Woody's (1912-67). Delmore too burst on the scene in the late 1930s as a golden young talent, but sputtered within a decade into a long horrifying decline. He too found it impossible to live up to his early acclaim, and what he wrote in his later years, as he turned inexorably psychotic, resembles the rambling stuff Woody Guthrie wrote during the first stages of his disease. Delmore too became a byword and a legend whose erratic life eventually overshadowed his work—which, compared to Woody Guthrie's, was more promise than performance, except for a handful of remarkable stories.

What makes this parallel especially interesting is that Delmore belonged to exactly the opposite corner of American culture from Woody Guthrie—urban, Jewish, neurotic, cosmopolitan, modernist. The *Partisan Review* intellectuals who admired and befriended Delmore Schwartz were the principal antagonists of everything Woody stood for, politically and artistically: Stalinism, optimism, rural populism, the democratization of culture, the popular front, the celebration of the American heritage and the search for national roots. Their roots were less in America than in the European intellectual tradition, with its

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fascination with political *ideas*; in immigrant life, with its attendant themes of alienation and assimilation, and in the advanced styles of European modernism, which they tried to insulate from any politically motivated criticism. To them the Americanism and populism of left-wing culture was a sham, a hollow tactical masquerade that produced philistine criticism and inferior, didactic art. (Songs to cheer on union meetings were not what the *Partisan Review* had in mind when it published parts of Eliot's *Four Quartets*.)

Delmore Schwartz never wrote about Woody Guthrie—he scarcely even mentions the plebeian Whitman, one of Woody's models—and Woody probably never heard of Delmore. The New York intellectuals were surely right about much of what passed for progressive culture; having started as party stalwarts, they knew it from the inside. But their bitter hostility blinded them to genuine expressions of political art—like some of the radical painters and muralists—and of the folk spirit, like Woody Guthrie, just as it blinded them to the deep streak of idealism and radicalism in many who followed the party line through all its demoralizing "sharp turns." Like parallel lines, Woody and Delmore never met though they occupied approximately the same cultural space. They represented the yin and yang of New York left-wing culture, the one taking refuge—as many *Partisan Review* writers finally did—in art against experience, in personal meanings as against political ones; the other creating art that seemed artless and anonymous, an art like Whitman's that pretended to be all experience.

The culture of modernism had its heyday in the 1950s, an Age of Criticism that admired irony and paradox and pulled back from politics. The culture of populism, in disarray during the 1950s, returned to the fray in the early 1960s with folk music, the civil rights movement, Pop Art and new bardic styles of poetry. Woody was rediscovered and hundreds of young folk singers made pilgrimages to his bedside. One of them, who called himself Bob Dylan, began by imitating Woody and sitting at his feet, but before long was writing lyrics that sounded like one of Delmore Schwartz's favorite poets, Rimbaud. Modernism went popular if not populist, much to the dismay of its older adherents. It was a fine old conflict but its terms were finally transcended.

Blood Sacrifice

ROBERT HOUSTON

THE SCAPEGOAT. *By Mary Lee Settle. Random House. 278 pp. $11.95.*

To some, it may come as a surprise that Mother Jones was a woman before she was a magazine, just as to many it has come as a surprise lately that something besides World War I happened between 1900 and 1920. Ask any high school student, even one who was brought up in Southern mining country, what he knows about the history of the Industrial Workers of the World, or the United Mine Workers. Or who Mother Jones was, or Big Bill Haywood, or Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. It's a safe bet you'll draw a blank, though you'll have considerably better luck if you try names such as Morgan, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt or Du Pont on him. He may have learned those in his Free Enterprise courses.

But Mary Lee Settle hasn't forgotten. *The Scapegoat*, her first novel since she won the 1978 National Book Award in fiction for *Blood Tie*, remembers those years and people superbly. And if, as it appears, there is a renascence of interest in that perhaps deliberately forgotten "golden age" of native radicalism in America, *The Scapegoat*'s timing is as right as its memory.

Though not a "strike novel," *The Scapegoat* uses as its focus a coal miners' strike in West Virginia in 1912. Whether it is based on a real strike is beside the point: it is fictionally real and fictionally accurate. Steinbeck is supposed to have said that history tells us what happened and fiction tells us how it felt. When you finish *The Scapegoat*, you know how it felt to be alive in 1912 during a coal miners' strike in West Virginia. The rest is quibbling.

Yet, to repeat, *The Scapegoat* is not a strike novel. We are shown only one afternoon, night and morning of the strike itself, though that brief period allows our imaginations to connect the dots for the rest. That's why *focus* is probably the best word to describe the function of the strike. The lives of the characters would most likely have taken their courses with much the same results had the strike not happened, and corporate capitalism would no doubt have gobbled up the country's mines just as inevitably. Yet the strike furnishes the unifying dramatic framework for a fictional treatment of those changes. Shaw says that someone watching a certain play of Brieux understands more about the life of a Paris policeman in two hours than the Paris policeman might after twenty years on the beat. Life happens by dribs and drabs, but fiction, to be effective, may not. Settle wrote plays before she wrote novels, and in *The Scapegoat* she applies those skills to fiction, with good effect.

What *The Scapegoat* is about, then, is violence and change. And revelation. About change in that the decline of the Lacey family, which has been in progress for years, finally reaches a point of no return during the strike—as does their world. Mine owner Beverley Lacey, husband of Ann and father of three daughters, is slowly dying of tuberculosis, in secret, he thinks. But it is no secret from Ann, and alone in her tower above the family's huge house on the hill, she allows the thought to slip up on her that she wishes he would get on with it. It is that "getting on with" many kinds of decline that the strike makes possible: the Laceys have been selling off their inherited land by bits for years, and have been driven into a smaller and smaller corner by the corporate interests who are buying up the other mines in the region. The revelation the strike brings is that they and their social world have already lost the battle, that they will at last have to sell

Robert Houston's latest novel, Bisbee '17 *(Pantheon), deals with the 1917 I.W.W. copper miners' general strike in Arizona. He teaches fiction writing at the University of Arizona.*

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out, and that nobody, not even themselves, really gives a damn. The burden is one neither Beverley nor Ann really wanted to begin with. Beverley is of a different generation, of different stuff from his coal-baron ancestors.

The violence that change does to their way of living is counterpointed, however, by the more overt violence that happens in the valley below them, in the mines and strike-born tent towns where the money to build and keep up the house on the hill has come from. The Laceys *are* caught in the middle of the battle between the union and the new corporations, yes, but theirs is a padded suffering, a tragedy at an unbridgeable remove from that of the miners. The corporations are determined to break the strike, not settle it. And that includes using goon squads (i.e., private "detectives") and "transportation men," or outside strikebreakers, many of whom are immigrants who have no notion of what they've been hired to do. Enter Mother Jones, the 82-year-old union organizer; add a frustrated, humiliated Capt. Dan Neill, the detective leader, and the conflict grows to the point where only a blood sacrifice will do—a scapegoat, who like most good scapegoats is a total innocent.

Too briefly, that's what *The Scapegoat* is about. But how and how well does it work? First, it is the characters who are primary, as in all of Settle's fiction. You find no straight-line plot development here: flashbacks, flash-forwards, extended ruminations, an ironic interplay of voices, all give *The Scapegoat* its rich texture. It is those voices, in fact, that are most likely Settle's best achievement. Voice is the soul of fiction in any case, and by voice we should mean not the mythical and touted "author's voice." It isn't at all the author's voice that matters most, but rather the author's ability to capture a narrative voice appropriate to his or her characters, place, time, etc. And whether she tells her story from a first- or third-person point of view (the book alternates these), Settle makes *The Scapegoat* a symphony of her characters' voices, captured with an unfailingly attuned ear. So, for the most part, the movements away from the direct forward momentum of the strike story do not seem interruptions.

I say for the most part. There is a long section—too long, I felt—in the first half of the book in which the fine ironic touch vanishes, and I found myself wishing mightily she would get on with the story. The book's scheme divides the world of the valley basically into that of the owners, the "redneck" miners and the immigrant miners. Among the immigrants, the Pagano family is the central one, as are the Laceys among the owners, and the Catletts (familiar Settle families, those) among the "rednecks." Yet the Laceys and the Catletts are far less representative of groups than they are collections of individuals—and their stories don't move us away from the world of the strike and the valley so much as they enclose it, define it.

Not so the Paganos. Somehow they remain Immigrants, Fine Noble Italians—a touch too romanticized for irony. We feel that we've seen them before in other books about immigrant families: of the father, Settle says, "He was a stonemason, but he wanted to be Michelangelo. He thought in America he would be. 'You can be what you want there,' he told them before they came." And to oversimplify, the mother, Annunziata, never quite becomes other than Anna Magnani playing an Italian mother and overdoing it a bit. Only the son, Eddie, a budding Mafioso or car dealer, escapes into complete credibility. Perhaps if we didn't leave the primary world of the book for quite so long at a hunk, didn't spend quite such long spells remembering Italian grandfathers and rummaging about in memories of childhoods in Italian towns, the sense of frustration wouldn't have a chance to gain the head it does.

Too, the heavy lacing with Italian of both the narration and the dialogue becomes a problem. A good rule of thumb in writing about foreigners in fiction is to use enough of the native speech to flavor the soup, but not so much that it overwhelms, nor in places in which the reader can get lost if he doesn't know the language. In *Blood Tie*, Settle's Turkish seemed to be used just right; in *The Scapegoat*, her Italian irritates at times.

None of this, of course, should really detract from the overall judgment of the book: it is as good a novel as anyone writing in this country today could have written. It further justifies Settle's National Book Award, and should be eagerly found, bought, read. Stylistically, it is her best; some of the early tendency toward lushness in rhetoric is fully controlled. Most Southern writers, Settle included, have been accused at one time or another of having read too much Faulkner. Not true. That Southern writers draw from the same well of rhetoric—rich, biblical, metaphoric—as did Faulkner is much closer to the truth. That magic water they draw is at once their strength and, if not controlled, their weakness. In *The Scapegoat* the control is consummate, the water pure.

A final thought: since *Ragtime*, much has been made of the virtues or vices of using real people in fiction, people who are almost (or are) our contemporaries. Maybe Mother Jones can settle the question for us, though in life she would no doubt have thought it a damn silly one to bother with. She is not one of the major point-of-view characters in *The Scapegoat*, yet she is dramatically very useful to it. In medieval drama, there was a common character since called by critics the Vice Figure, the stirrer-up, the catalyst, the tempter. A later comic version of this figure is, of course, Puck, who has very little to do with vice, as we define it. Mother Jones in *The Scapegoat* performs that vice figure function admirably: she is a delight, yet, as some of the characters realize, she brings something with her, consequences, that they know they must eventually face. That she was a real woman, a piece of history, should not be a consideration at all. She works fictionally and remains in character; *The Scapegoat* is a novel, not a historical text (nor is it something called "faction" or "docu-fiction"). There the question should rest, unless critics should want to begin to argue whether Henry V should be written out of *Henry V*.

Perhaps one reason Mary Lee Settle did not receive the recognition she deserved for so many years was that she steadfastly refused fads. During two and a half decades of too much solip-

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sism in fiction, of clichéd "experimentalism," of form without substance, she has continued to write about such things as justice, the human heart, right and wrong—things it became fashionable to forget. In *The Scapegoat* she still writes about those things, and does it excellently. It is an important book. □

Continental Drift

TERRENCE DES PRES

CRITICISM IN THE WILDERNESS: THE STUDY OF LITERATURE TODAY. *By Geoffrey H. Hartman. Yale University Press. 323 pp. $18.*

Hard to believe, but when I was a graduate student in the 1960s, T. S. Eliot's avuncular notions still held undisputed sway. If he said tradition was the better part of talent, we set out to absorb the big books before daring to think on our own. If he claimed that a dissociation of sensibility infected modern literature, a split between thought and perception, we applauded perception at thought's expense. And his famous remark about Henry James —a mind so fine no idea could enter it —was taken as revelation.

In perspective, and like much other Eliotic nonsense, these were anti-intellectual attitudes, fearful of mind's rampant probing, and what they voiced was not truth but a program. The program, which I. A. Richards called "practical criticism" and which for a time was known as "New Criticism," still accounts for most literary study in America. Close reading, innocent of theory or ideas, is fostered as the critic's foremost job, as if the text were self-generated, self-contained and—since interpretations clash—needs saving merely by reading *more closely.*

There is a nice irony here. The closer we read a poem or novel, as Geoffrey Hartman observes in *Criticism in the Wilderness*, "the stranger the text: either because what we learn is, precisely, to respect its otherness, its historical difference, or because it becomes too richly ambiguous, polysemous, or even indefinite in meaning." And once this stage is reached, a certain duplicity shows up in criticism itself. Again, Hartman: "Literary commentary is comparable to the detective novel: confronted by a bewildering text, it acts out a solution, trying various defenses, various interpretations, then pretending it has come to an authoritative stance—when, in truth, it has simply purged itself of complexities never fully mastered." Art, in other words, resists the meanings it provokes. The deeper we dig, the more perplexing literature becomes, and not just literature but the business of digging itself, the function and status of criticism. At which point critical thinking calls for self-examination. At which point we witness the rise of "hermeneutics," "revisionism," "deconstruction." At which point, pandemonium.

Criticism in the Wilderness may be the best, most brilliant, most broadly useful book yet written by an American about the sudden swerve from the safety of established decorum toward bravely theoretical, mainly European forms of literary criticism. There are, however, immediate reasons why this book, when you first take it up, will

Terrence Des Pres is the author of The Survivor *(Oxford University Press) and is writing a book on poetry and music.*

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disturb and put you off. Professor Hartman's style, for example, is always elegant but relies deliberately on puns, allusions, jumbled language levels, wild quoting, moments of self-parody and splashes of arcane terminology. Hartman also moves back and forth at lightning speed from thinker to thinker, leaping prodigiously from one incisive insight to the next. And the book's basic structure is hard-line *and* oracular, rational-empirical *and* theoretical-mystical. All of this is by way of demonstration, Hartman showing us the kind of thinking he wishes to defend; and all of this, if you hang on, turns out to be great fun and cause for high intellectual excitement.

Hartman is one of our smartest scholars; he knows as much about modern culture as anybody and says lots fast, yet not without a meditative undertow. He reminds me of Robert Burton, whose *The Anatomy of Melancholy*—the supremely bookish book, its coinage of discourse other discourse—is the fit forerunner, along with Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, of Hartman's enterprise. His method is playful, for reasons he clearly sets forth, but his message is deeply in earnest. He defines a kind of critical thinking which he calls "speculative," "philosophical," "theoretical," a kind of literary criticism which refuses the subordinate position assigned to it by Anglo-American practice, a criticism which would engage rather than serve its object, or, put another way, which presumes to serve literature best by becoming a counterliterature of its own.

I do not say that if you read Hartman you will be converted. The ideas of critics like Harold Bloom and Jacques Derrida are hard to love. But the predicament of literature will appear more racked with riddles than most of us dreamed, and those of us who think steadily about literature, about culture, about the toils of interpretation, must at least test the strength of our positions against the challenge Hartman offers.

To dismiss Continental thinkers as theory-mad is no solution. And here Hartman is especially helpful. The likes of Heidegger, Lukacs, Benjamin and Derrida are suddenly articulate. The rites of revisionism and deconstruction are revealed in a bright sweep of formulations, some as simple as saying that criticism "discloses the iconoclastic within the iconic." In the end we must face Hartman's position in the spirit of his own example, as when he says: "No thinker can pass Freud, Marx or Nietzsche unconcerned; he must find something in the minds of men like these that is more sublime than what their minds destroyed. It is not modishness but necessity that impels us to struggle with them."

The necessity of revaluation, in this case, has two sources. At this point in time criticism has established a world of its own, complete with classics and commentary on the commentaries, which is often as demanding and significant as the "creative" literature it studies. Given this degree of autonomy, criticism becomes a powerful institution and needs to be valued as such. The other source involves the shortcomings of the "practical" approach. Criticism as a service function, as a genteel dialogue, as a classy cribbing which authorizes this or that interpretation, is useful but *not equal* to the problems inherent in the nature of literary phenomena.

Suppose, for example, that the secret spring of realism is antirepresentational. That sounds crazy, but writers are forever claiming to be the first to describe things as they really are, and what they create is *meant* to destroy earlier representations. A dialectic of this or any sort is beyond the means of the practical approach. Or again, in a scientific, secular world like ours, how are we to deal with the "visionary" element in poetry, the "scandalous figure" in Rimbaud or Yeats? As Hartman says: "It is not sufficient to resolve this dilemma by claiming that no one really takes Yeats's supernatural theme in a literal way. There it is, after all." Yes, and it won't work to say that part of the poetry is not part of the poetry.

To bring up issues like these is profoundly unsettling, especially when art and literature seem the last realm of coherence and transcendent value available to us. The advent of the "Revisionist Reversal," as Hartman calls it, is therefore viewed by opponents as a sort of terrorism intent on exploding Pandora's box. Do we need this endless complication? But as Hartman says, "There it is, after all." The problems are real and probably unsolvable. That we must confront them nonetheless is criticism's crisis.

Hartman describes this crisis in

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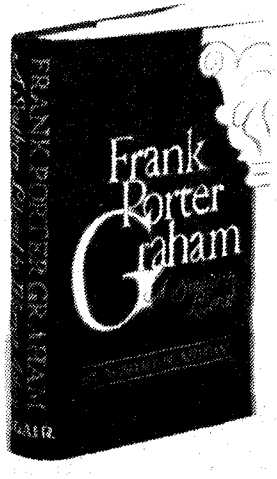

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elegant detail, and what he comes up with is not a solution but a strategy. Let us drop, or at least modify, the division between primary and secondary texts, between creative and critical writing, and think instead that all writing merits close scrutiny. Let the critical essay take back its speculative, creative powers and join forces with philosophy, keeping in mind that theory is only a tool and that ideas, rather than applied systems, best mobilize the spirit of inquiry. The very fact that criticism exists argues that art is not as free-standing as it appears; the situation is one of symbiosis, of mutual recognition, even justification, which ought to be utilized rather than deplored. In Hartman's view, this project takes its start in the seminal thinkers of German Romanticism, Hegel especially, and revives the examples of Coleridge, Carlyle and Pater in England. The aim is to produce criticism which addresses a text but which is likewise a text in its own right.

It will be objected that Hartman has been at pains to glorify his own profession and lift a second-order activity to the commanding status of art. Yes and no. Criticism gains a new dignity from boldly confronting its relation to literature, and by sacrificing the security of mere commentary, it extends the borders of literary experience. But it remains tied to a text and inherits that pathos: "It both soars and stutters as it creates the new text that rises up, prankishly, against a prior text that will surely repossess it."

A more serious objection is that by refusing to remain subordinate, criticism runs the risk of irresponsibility, promoting chaos and breaking norms. Again, yes and no. If the norms are false, they must go. And we are already deep in chaos; "tradition" is the euphemism we use to cover arbitrary order, and all critical theory stays rooted in what Hartman calls its "text-milieu," the very limited number of books we happen to know. As for responsibility, cant and posturing are always with us; but we don't have to read far, in a given case, to sense which way the wind blows.

We have only to see the remarkable things Hartman can say about specific poems—by Yeats, Dickinson, Williams—to realize that such insights simply cannot be had within the confines of practical criticism. As always, the proof is in the pudding. Revisionist criticism, which uses ideas freely, which dares to speculate, which exploits its own predicament and conducts itself in accord with its new sense of import, enriches the study of literature immensely. It keeps the mind's options open, turning now toward theology, now toward politics, expanding the reach of the art which remains at its center. □

'The Disinterested Man'

PETER STEINFELS

WALTER LIPPMANN AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY. *By Ronald Steel. Atlantic-Little, Brown & Company. 669 pp. $19.95.*

Walter Lippmann's early years read like an improbable fiction, a *Ragtime* of astonishment, in which Our Hero ricochets from one historical personage to another. Indeed the proper music for those years *is* ragtime, compared to the stately marches of his extended editorial eminence, the operatic crescendo of his midlife divorce and remarriage, the resurgent bugle calls of his break, in his eighth decade, with official Washington over Vietnam, the fading tones of his final years.

Of course we take for granted that a distinguished political journalist and author should dine and discourse with the famous and powerful. But Lippmann seemed destined for this sort of thing—from the age of 8 when he was presented to Adm. George Dewey on the veranda of the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York. Lippmann's family was wealthy; he had all the advantages of excellent schooling and European travel; but for all that, he was a Jew and therefore an outsider, an outsider with an almost magical capacity for becoming an insider.

Here is Lippmann at Harvard (in a class that included T. S. Eliot, John Reed and Heywood Broun) opening his door to find William James come to congratulate the 19-year-old student on an article in a college magazine. Lippmann begins to take tea with James and his wife every Thursday morning at eleven. He becomes the star pupil, assistant and dinner companion of George Santayana. He so impresses Graham Wallas, arrived at Harvard in 1910 to give a seminar on politics, that four years later Wallas would dedicate *The Great Society* to his former student.

Here is Lippmann doing legwork for Lincoln Steffens, a position to which he had dexterously promoted himself. He lectures for socialist circles, writes for socialist journals (W. E. B. Du Bois was a fellow board member of the *New Review*) and does a four-month stint as assistant to the mildly socialist reform Mayor of Schenectady, collaborating with Charles Steinmetz and enlisting the support of Annie Sullivan and her

Peter Steinfels is executive editor of Commonweal *and author of* The Neoconservatives *(Simon & Schuster/Touchstone Books).*

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former student, Helen Keller, ardent socialists all.

Here is Lippmann in Mabel Dodge's Greenwich Village salon, advising his hostess on her stormy affair with Reed, trying to inject some rational discussion into a debate about revolution among Big Bill Haywood, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and William English Walling. Here he is joining Dodge, Steffens and Margaret Sanger in organizing a mammoth march and pageant (sets designed by Bobby Jones) for striking Paterson, New Jersey, textile workers.

Here is the 25-year-old Lippmann, with Felix Frankfurter, invited to breakfast at the Harvard Club with his boyhood hero, Teddy Roosevelt. T. R. is laying the groundwork for his 1916 Presidential campaign, and Lippmann promptly produces a memorandum for him on labor policy. Walter embarks for England, meets the Webbs, H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Wickham Steed, John Hobson, Ezra Pound, Lytton Strachey. He attends the Fabians' annual summer school where G. D. H. Cole is leading a revolt of guild socialists against the Webbs. Lippmann tries but fails to entice George Bernard Shaw into a discussion of psychoanalysis (Shaw wants to talk about motor cars) but does fall in with one Leonard Woolf and has his chat about Freudianism after all.

The war alters Lippmann profoundly. "My own part in this is to understand world politics," he writes in his diary the day Britain mobilized, "and to get away from the old liberalism which concentrates entirely on local problems." But the war does not slow him. He plunges into work at *The New Republic*, where he is part of the original staff assembled by Herbert Croly. Abandoning the saber-rattling Roosevelt for Woodrow Wilson in 1916, he writes speeches for the President and soon is a protégé of Colonel House. At the end of 1917 he is working feverishly to draw up the memorandum on which Wilson bases the eight "territorial" points of the Fourteen Points. And a year later he is in the Hotel Crillon in Paris watching his hopes for the postwar settlement crumble. He leaves his new acquaintances, like John Maynard Keynes and Bernard Berenson, and returns home where he will fight the treaty. The ragtime years are over. Lippmann is about to turn 30.

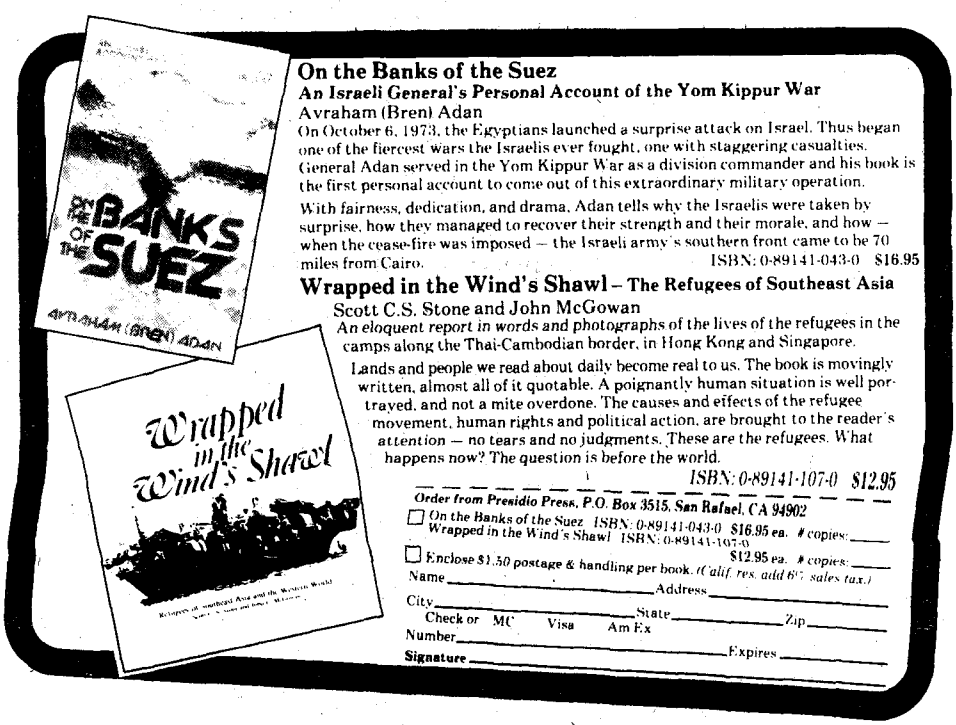
It is not hard to find reasons for disliking the young Lippmann of Ronald Steel's portrait. He is ambitious and knows how to cultivate his contacts. He seems prematurely mature, a bit of a prig and more than a bit of a genius: who can unqualifiedly admire a man with two remarkable books, *A Preface to Politics* and *Drift and Mastery*, under his belt before the age of 25? Reading Steel, one gets little concrete sense of why so many acquaintances found Lippmann charming and entertaining. Yet there is no doubt that they did. "A fine poise, a cool understanding, and with all the high humor in the world shining in his intelligent eyes," Mabel Dodge wrote of him; and surely it took more than concentrated brainpower to win the admiration of such worldly and skeptical elders as Learned Hand, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. and Colonel House.

Lippmann was already determined to be as impeccably reasonable as he was dressed, a determination that provoked more than one inherently unreasonable episode. In 1915, Lippmann arranged a meeting between the young reform Mayor of New York City and Isadora Duncan, who greets the Mayor with outstretched arms in the curtain-festooned loft she called her Temple of Beauty and Art, and who frightens the Mayor away with an invitation to join her on a narrow velvet settee and discuss the abolition of the family. Lippmann fell in with Harry Houdini in 1924 and successfully urged him to demonstrate how a magician could "read minds" in order to counteract the current fad for spiritualism that was touching even Ralph Pulitzer, his publisher at the New York *World*.

Lippmann was an apostle of the mind. Enthusiasm had to give way to that "cool understanding"; passion would be mastered by reason. Clarity, coolness, rationality, disinterestedness, detachment—these were the stellar words in Lippmann's vocabulary. Lippmann, writes Steel, was a "rationalist in an age of hot ideologies and global crusades."

Lippmann's intellectualism and his conservatism are major themes in this biography. In addition, Steel traces Lippmann's search for a worthy political hero, a search the author attributes to the vacuum created by an emotionally absent father. Steel also explores Lippmann's theory that a commentator should keep a proper distance from political power, in contrast to his constant involvement in behind-the-scenes politicking.

Steel's biography, although it is vivid in detail and respectful in tone, is also highly critical and at times extremely unflattering. The standpoint from which the criticism is made is late-1960s liberalism. Lippmann is found wanting for his compromises on civil liberties, his lack of concern for the condition of blacks, his unwillingness to pursue any cause to the point of breaking with the Establishment. His finest hour thus becomes his ultimate opposition to the war in Vietnam, the "capstone" of his career and in some measure the resolution of the major themes of his life.



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Real anger breaks through the cocoon of his intellectuality: "He allowed his passions to come tumbling out, and in his denunciation of the war recaptured the daring of the young man." He realizes that L.B.J., like Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, could not sustain the hopes Lippmann had placed in him. He belatedly recognizes the dangers of growing too chummy with the powerful. And he begins to assess the whole thrust of American history in a much more critical manner.

Yet there are problems with implici measuring Lippmann against this libe standard throughout the book. Even a a socialist, for example, Lippmann was never really a democrat. His expressions of concern for the "masses" are stilted and filled with noblesse oblige. He revolts against suffering, but even more against stupidity, the dumb weight of tradition, the resistance of social arrangements to intelligence. He is one of those Progressives who wanted to return government not so much to the people as to the Better People.

Lippmann, in fact, was a Gaullist. Charles de Gaulle turned out to be the only hero who never disappointed him —a man of decisive action who was also genuinely a man of ideas, a leader who surmounted the fray of electoral politics, who took his mandate from the intellectual vision and national qualities he represented. Lippmann was content with the *dirigisme* bred in the *haute écoles*. He was, not surprisingly, de Gaulle's best interpreter on these shores.

Steel perceives in Lippmann this early and deep impatience with democracy. But he seems startled anew by each of its fresh expressions. His distress is understandable; but by always measuring Lippmann against a liberal-democratic standard, Steel misses what could be seen by measuring him against a conservative one.

In many ways, Lippmann was a precursor of today's conservative intellectuals. Like them he admired what Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1965 called "the professionalization of reform." Like them he understood the dangers of liberation from old certainties and warned against "the chaos of a new freedom." Like them he tried to find a substitute for the living religion from which modern rationalism had exiled him, and could only propose a personal stoicism and a kind of awe for government itself, expressed in phrases like "the traditions of civility" and "the public interest." (Lippmann's *The Public Philosophy* is a desperately sad book; seventeen years in the making, it finally turned out to be a series of poorly connected arguments, each beginning with a bang and ending in a whimper.) Like today's conservative intellectuals, he equated political freedom with capitalism.

As is often the case, however, the earlier model is superior to the later ones. At least Lippmann was quite candid in his doubts about democracy. These doubts arose, of course, partly from temperament, partly from living comfortably in the inner circles and partly as a way of casting on the "people" the burden of his own recurrent disappointments with national leaders. Lippmann questions some very real problems about the scale of political life in the twentieth century—particularly of international affairs—and the strained capacity of citizens to interpret distant events and understand complicated systems of forces on the basis of their direct experience. That these problems of scale and distance and capacity have often, Lippmann's case included, been advanced as rationalizations for leaving critical political decisions in the hands of "experts" does not make them any the less real problems. Lippmann, in addition, never descended to the neo-jingoism that prevails today among many conservative intellectuals, nor did he ever turn from insisting on the complexity of politics to urge a fundamentalist return to allegedly plain and simple realities.

It is finally Lippmann's remorseless intellectualism, even more than his conservatism, that is the most fascinating, and the most moving, theme of this superb biography. Steel heads one chapter, not without considerable irony, "The Disinterested Man"; and that might as well have served as a title for the book. Lippmann's faith in the power of intellect had its underside, according to Steel: an emotional blockage that burst into view as the traumatic midlife love affair with and subsequent marriage to his best friend's wife. His famous detachment was also a factor in his flight from his Jewishness, a pattern of assimilation common enough among wealthy German Jews of his age, but disturbing when it led to trimming on the question of Harvard's 1922 institution of an informal quota on Jewish students, and morally repellent when it meant a reserved attitude toward the victims of Nazi persecution.

The biography could also be titled *The Education of Walter Lippmann*. One senses that it was a drive for understanding as much as for influence that led Lippmann not only to investigate Wall Street shenanigans for Steffens but, later, to cultivate international financiers and political wirepullers. It is natural to see Lippmann's political compromises and his partiality for the established as a falling away from his ideal of detachment. But, oddly enough, these are ways the drive for truth can express itself: coming down in the middle of complicated issues in order to guard oneself against any dogmatism; giving the benefit of the doubt to those on top, who naturally appear to have the most comprehensive view of a question. What makes Lippmann's failures so moving is that they had secret roots in, and therefore revealed the limits of, the heroic ideal he espoused.

Exactly how much of a heroic ideal it was gets understressed in Steel's long and never dull narrative. But here is Lippmann, age 25, editorializing in *The New Republic* a few months after the outbreak of the First World War: "The final argument against cannon is ideas. . . . The labor of thought . . . is

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the only force that can pierce the agglomerated passion and wrong-headedness of this disaster. . . . There is only one way to break the vicious circle of action, and that is by subjecting it endlessly to the most ruthless criticism of which we are capable."

Those lines are noble, but also, I believe, mistaken. This final argument against cannon is something richer than "ideas"—a bond of feeling between creatures, a capacity for empathy and a will for service without which the greatest eloquence or analytic power is as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. But if not ultimate, ideas and criticism are vitally important. I would not trust the political person who could not respond to Lippmann's lines, and who could not, therefore, feel pity and dread for a young man embarked on a road so full of pitfalls. □

'Utensils Down the Dream'

ROBERT B. SHAW

SELECTED POEMS. *By W. S. Graham. Ecco Press. 112 pp. $12.95.*

BEING HERE: POETRY 1977-1980. *By Robert Penn Warren. Random House. 128 pp. $8.95. Paper $4.95.*

MORTAL ACTS, MORTAL WORDS. *By Galway Kinnell. Houghton Mifflin Company. 72 pp. $8.95. Paper $4.95.*

THE RIGHT MADNESS ON SKYE. *By Richard Hugo. W. W. Norton & Company. 63 pp. $12.95. Paper $4.95.*

THE VARIOUS LIGHT. *By Alfred Corn. Viking Press/Penguin Books. 76 pp. $12.95. Paper $7.95.*

W. S. Graham, born in Greenock, Scotland, in 1918 and now living in Cornwall, is not well known in this country. This is a pity, for he is one of the most original British poets of the last thirty years. *Selected Poems* will provide American readers with a view of at least the summits of his achievement. The book understandably passes by the early poems, which were slavishly imitative of Dylan Thomas. The later Graham sounds like no one but himself, although his spare elegance of diction and his quirky glances toward the grotesque may momentarily bring to mind the poetry of Robert Graves. The indisputable masterpiece of this collection is "The Nightfishing," a poem of epic breadth in sixteen pages, describing a man's night working on a herring boat. It may be the best sea poem in the language, and it is one of the few poems in English which convincingly evokes the feeling of physical labor: it makes one's muscles ache to read it. Graham is equally adept at giving us the ocean in calm and in squall; "This grace, this movement bled into this place,/Locks the boat still in the grey of the seized sea," he writes, and

> . . . The long rollers,
> Quick on the crests and shirred with fine foam,
> Surge down then sledge their green tons weighing dead
> Down on the shuddered deck-boards.

In his later poems Graham has exchanged this surging music for one more reserved, as eerie and echoing as some of T. S. Eliot's late verse. Many of these are in tensely rhythmed three- or four-beat lines, now taut, now hovering, with disconcerting enjambments emphasizing the shifts of meaning that result when words collide or uncouple. There are several fine love lyrics and elegies, but the subject or perhaps obsession of most of these late poems is language. Graham attempts the dangerous strategy of looking over his own shoulder as he writes poetry and composing descriptions of what happens—or at least suggesting analogies for it. The theme lends itself to pomposity; fortunately Graham goes at it with humor and humility.

> The poem is not a string of knots
> Tied for a meaning of another time
> And country, unreadable, found
> By chance. The poem is not a henge
> Or Easter Island emerged Longnose
> Or a tally used by early unknown
> Peoples. The words we breathe and puff
> Are our utensils down the dream
> Into the manhole. Replace the cover.

Robert Penn Warren is as beset by fame as Graham is by obscurity. At 75 he is unquestionably the foremost living poet of this era, remarkably versatile and almost frighteningly prolific. *Being Here* includes fifty poems, some fairly

Robert B. Shaw teaches in the English department at Yale University and is the author of a collection of poetry, Comforting the Wilderness *(Wesleyan).*

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extended, written over the last three years. In his recent collections Warren has blurred the boundaries dividing poem from poem, working toward broader thematic configurations. Perhaps his experience as a novelist has impelled him to this. Readers wishing to praise *Being Here* will say that it is a notably unified collection. Those wishing to demur will say it is self-indulgently repetitive. I would have difficulty in siding completely with either camp.

It would seem, not just from this volume but from earlier ones, that Warren is the kind of poet (as was Theodore Roethke) who builds up meaning through the seemingly tireless re-examination of images. It may be that to achieve one truly memorable poem involving snow or moonlight or autumn leaves or the Pacific Ocean he must write a handful that are not as memorable, though invoking similar data. I myself would be happy to grant Warren his serial imagery if he would trim back the overblown philosophical pronouncements to which he is prone. One cringes, glancing down the page, to see (oh, God, again!) Time with a capital T being exclaimed upon. Truth, also uppercase, appears with equally tedious insistence. Warren at his best is, as he has always been, an accomplished poet with more energy than he knows how to manage. Sometimes this excess of energy finds an outlet in a stridently willed vulgarity that is unconvincing in a writer of his sophistication. When he goes in for the easy antipoetry of "August Moon" ("Gold like a half-slice of orange/Fished from a stiff Old-Fashioned, the moon/Lolls on the sky . . . ") you want to fling up your hands: it is as if Thomas Jefferson had waved aside the idea of Monticello and determined instead on a tin-roofed shack. Yet this is the same poet who can turn such immediately appealing lines as those which begin "Timeless, Twinned":

> Angelic, lonely, antochthonous, one white
> Cloud lolls, unmoving, on an azure which
> Is called the sky, and in gold drench of light,
> No leaf, however gold, may stir, nor a single blade twitch,
>
> Though autumn-honed, of the cattail by the pond. No voice
> Speaks, since here no voice knows
> The language in which a tongue might now rejoice.
> So silence, a transparent flood, thus overflows. . . .

I have stressed the problematic aspect of the volume because I trust that its better poems will find an audience regardless of critical advocacy. Poems of childhood reminiscence such as "Speleology" and "Safe in Shade," the grotesque narrative "The Cross" and the poem of natural sublimity, "Preternaturally Early Snowfall in Mating Season," as well as a number of others, stand high in Warren's still evolving canon.

Galway Kinnell's book is a puzzlingly mixed performance. Some of the shorter poems are among his best. One does not forget the small but daunting surprise of "The Gray Heron," in which the poet, pursuing the bird he has glimpsed, comes instead upon a lizard:

> It stopped and tilted its head,
> which was much like
> a fieldstone with an eye
> in it, which was watching me
> to see if I would go
> or change into something else.

Other fine moments come in "Daybreak," with its vision of starfish moving across tidal mud "as slowly/as the actual stars cross heaven," and in "Saint Francis and the Sow," which does in fact deserve to be called Franciscan. "Blackberry Eating" finds a happy metaphor for such alert and zestful writing:

> . . . the ripest berries
> fall almost unbidden to my tongue,
> as words sometimes do, certain
> peculiar words
> like *strengths* or *squinched*,
> many-lettered, one-syllabled lumps,
> which I squeeze, squinch open, and
> splurge. . .

Kinnell's longer pieces are by contrast disappointing—flaccid and sprawling. The flaccidity is both of structure and tone: sentences ramble on for twenty lines or more in search of a full stop while the poet indulges in extended bouts of sentimentality. Kinnell is most in danger of such lapses not when he is writing about the people closest to him (he has some genuinely moving family poems) but when he takes on The Human Condition. The quickness of his eye for nature's darting beauties is not matched by a sense equally precise of realities that transcend the visible. In a poem coyly entitled "There Are Things I Tell to No One" he writes: "I say 'God'; I believe,/rather, in a music of grace/that we hear, sometimes, playing to us/from the other side of happiness." Kinnell's talent isn't well served by such ideas. Quite a number of great poems have been inspired by faith in God; how many have issued from a belief in a music of grace from the other side of happiness? Precious few.

Richard Hugo's *The Right Madness on Skye* consists of poems written during the better part of a year on the Isle of Skye off the west coast of Scotland. I am probably the wrong madman to review it, having, like Hugo, an inordinate fondness for bleak, druidic, Hebridean landscapes. Someone lacking our fascination might find in this book rather more Celtic lore than he cared to swallow. Yet Hugo's unfaltering appetite for such material may be enough to keep the book moving. His poems are not often interesting as verse; like a lot of American poets he seems to think the idea is to write something that is just barely not prose. Yet he manages to conduct himself with a good deal more liveliness and flexibility than one might think his rather nondescript medium would permit.

One doesn't so much *read* these poems as listen to a distinctive voice tirelessly expressing itself. Genial, gar-

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rulous, humorously irreverent but innately serious, Hugo is like your uncle who talks too much but remains hard not to like. His musings over the disasters of Scottish history are tough and unhackneyed. He shows himself aware of the limits of fantasy, as when he imagines bringing back the victims of the brutal eighteenth-century land clearances, only to realize: " . . . they'd come ashore the way they left,/numbed by hard labor and grim/and I'd be no friend in their flat eyes." As an amateur archeologist Hugo is imaginatively at home with the inarticulate, with primitive people and their voiceless monuments. In "The Standing Stones of Callanish," he pictures neolithic tribes setting up their huge "stones [that] wear better than sky":

> I imagine them resting a moment,
> then grim with resolve
> starting down to the sea to get
> the next stone,
> and one woman thought strange
> but obeyed,
> urging them on and muttering hard
> at the sky
> a word we've lost. It sounded like
> "shape." It meant "world."

There are subtler effects beyond the range of such a style; but the take-it-or-leave-it tone of Hugo's voice is attractive. It comes to seem as much a moral as an esthetic quality.

The Various Light is Alfred Corn's third book, following *All Roads at Once* (1976) and *A Call in the Midst of the Crowd* (1978). Corn's prodigious gifts, evident from the beginning, have reached such a peak of articulation in his new book that it no longer suffices to describe him as a promising poet. Potentiality has been swallowed up in the splendor of achievement. The title of the book comes from Andrew Marvell, and Corn may be said to have earned a comparison with that seventeenth-century master, with whom he shares urbanity, wit, authoritative phrasing and an exciting tension between skeptical intelligence and mystical intuition. For all that, Corn's style is not that of a latter-day metaphysical poet. He has assimilated tendencies of his own century. The most discernible influence on his style is that of Stevens, and by being fully aware of his debt Corn turns what could have been an inhibiting factor into a creative opportunity. "Gloze" is an allusion to Stevens's "The Death of the Soldier," not a parody but in its own words a "ghostly echo" of the earlier text. The two poems relate to each other as a composer's variations may adapt an earlier composer's theme. "At the Grave of Wallace Stevens" succeeds as homage by observing scale; it eschews inflated rhetoric and mounts one of the more effective tributes directed by one poet to another, strongly felt and felicitous:

> The bluster, the tawny lions of
> other
> Marches take their place in gentle
> order
> To feel the flaw as a widening melt
> And hear the wind speaking along
> bright strings—
> The sun's a hat to be put on
> and then
> Lightly doffed to you.

In most of the other poems one is less aware of influences than of Corn's formal and descriptive strengths. He is especially good at what might be called the topographical lyric, the poem which mingles place with an observing mind's meditations. "Cornwall," "Remembering Mykinai" and the beautiful poem about Stonington, "The Village," are examples. Best of all, and grander in scope than any of these successes, is "The Outdoor Amphitheater," a various and luminous account of the poet's Georgia childhood, running to twelve awesomely sustained pages.

When Pound said of *The Waste Land* that it was the longest poem in the English language, he meant that nothing in it was superfluous. The same can be said of "The Outdoor Amphitheater." Its texture is so closely woven that paraphrase is bound to do it injustice. The drama of the growth of the poet's mind is deftly re-enacted by invoking memories of the summer plays and pageants he witnessed or took part in as a boy. His humorous and affectionate recalling of the limitless array of life's possibilities symbolized by the theater is balanced against a delicate and austere sense of regret for the losses time has brought upon him. Neither feeling predominates; but expressed through Corn's rendering of "those first scenes, lapidary, paintbox bright" they merge to yield a complex vision of life. Few poets of our time have drawn upon the wisdom of experience with such unaffected honesty and tactful skill. If Corn continues to write verse of such resonance he will be a very important American poet indeed; as it is, at the age of 37, he stands in the forefront of his generation. □

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America's Artful Dodger

PHYLLIS ROSE

WALT WHITMAN: A LIFE. *By Justin Kaplan. Simon & Schuster. 429 pp. $15.*

When the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* appeared in 1855, its author, who chose not to reveal his identity on the title page, wrote and seeded at least three anonymous reviews of his own work, hailing the arrival of a new American bard. In the second edition a year later, along with twenty new poems, he included the astonishing letter he had received from Emerson ("I greet you at the beginning of a great career . . ."), part of which he had stamped in gold on the volume's spine. He also answered the letter publicly, assuring Emerson of the first edition's great success and the quick sale of its thousand copies. Friendly journalists were informed of the sensation the book had created on both sides of the Atlantic.

There had been no sensation. Perhaps ten copies of the first edition had sold, and the rest were given away to friends and relatives. And in later years, Walt Whitman would go to equal trouble to propagate the myth of his utter and lifelong neglect. As he remade his great work through nine editions in his lifetime, adding, deleting and changing, he also remade himself. Revising every period of his life and erasing the documentation of some, he shaped his own history to conform to the identity he at last achieved—the genial, expansive, democratic genius. "In what may have been his ultimate disguise," writes Justin Kaplan in this brilliant, innovative and riveting biography of the artful dodger of American letters, "he declared his belief in the existence of 'the real Me.' "

Too many literary biographies still have as their guiding metaphor the organic image of the writer as a kind of plant, whose genius has a seed-time, an inevitable flowering and a blowzy stage of decay. This image, and its correlative assumption that the child is father to the man, dates back at least as far as Wordsworth. And it has been reinforced by Freudian psychology, which we must also hold responsible for the tedious way that most biographies begin with the least interesting part of a writer's life, and seem, in some crucial ways, never to move beyond it.

By beginning the book toward the end of Whitman's life and by placing at the start an overview of Whitman's character and achievement, Kaplan refreshingly disrupts the usual pattern of biography and eases artfully into the treatment of the long foreground of *Leaves of Grass*. Kaplan insists there is no necessary connection between Walter Whitman, schoolteacher, printer, newspaper editor and author of imitative fiction of the 1840s, and Walt Whitman, the self-proclaimed "kosmos" of 1855. In Kaplan's handling of the story, there is nothing inevitable about the flowering of Whitman's genius. Instead there is a dialectic between the mundane and the miraculous—between the indolent riding of ferries and the writing of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

For the Freudian narrative, Kaplan

Phyllis Rose teaches English literature at Wesleyan University and is the author of Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf *(Oxford University Press).*

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substitutes the more dynamic Eriksonian paradigm of development, which presents adult life as a series of crucial adjustments and self-definitions, with normal crises of "identity," "intimacy" and "generativity." But even the Eriksonian grid touches lightly on these pages (Freudian formulations are encaged in footnotes), and Kaplan employs his best imaginative effort to delineate the grids, the structures of understanding and belief, that Whitman himself imposed on experience.

The poet's wide-ranging and absorptive mind was filled with ephemeral orthodoxies, at least one of which significantly influenced the way he looked at his own life. Phrenology, a primitive science of the mind, located character traits physically inside the head, where they expressed themselves as bumps on the skull; it offered the hope that a person's nature could be understood and, possibly, therapeutically adjusted by the willed, systematic expansion of certain traits and the suppression of others.

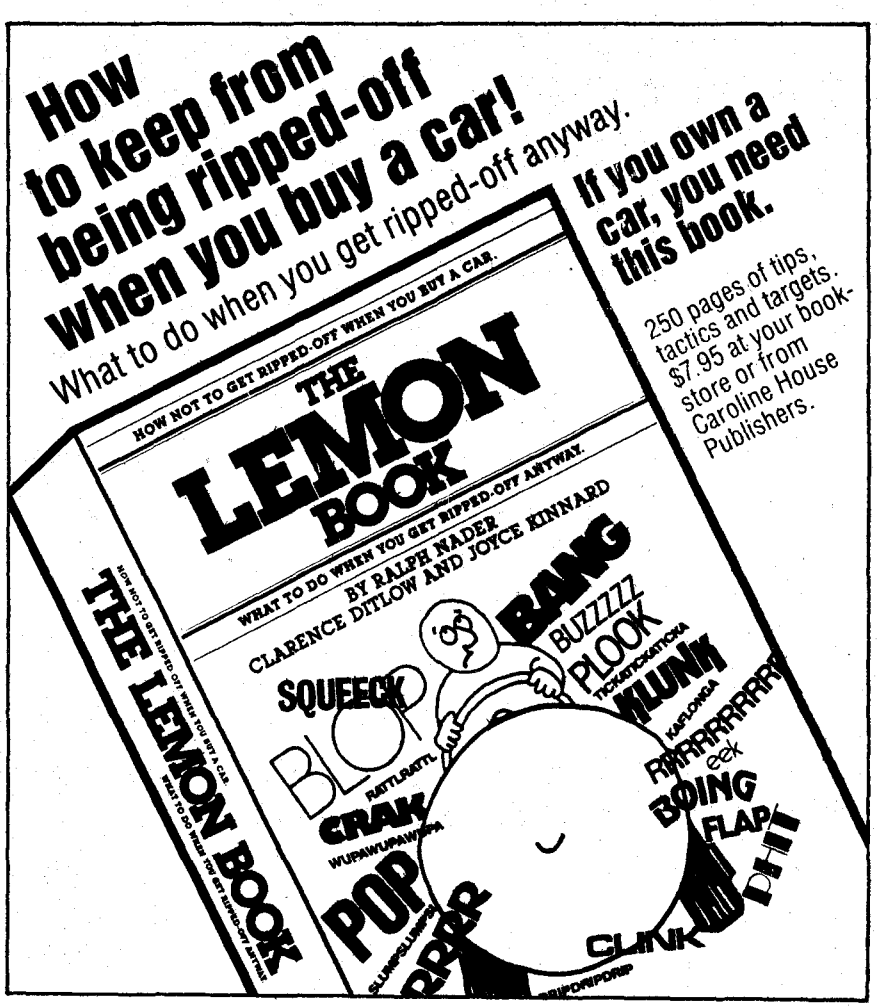
Whitman had his head read. Phrenology supplied him with the underpinnings of a personal mythology and, by telling him that he was powerfully endowed with "amativeness" but also with "adhesiveness" (love of comrades) and "philoprogenitiveness" (strangely close to Erikson's "generativity") allowed him to rationalize confused sexual emotions and to celebrate freely both the love of comrades and sexual love, which he naïvely distinguished. It allowed him to act upon his lifelong instinct to befriend young men, nurture them, touch and kiss them, sleep with them, and to think of it as adhesiveness and philoprogenitiveness. When, in later years, English homosexuals tried to get him to enlist frankly in their camp, Whitman furiously rejected their "morbid inferences, wh' are disavow'd by me & seem damnable."

Gay activists will probably not be satisfied with Kaplan's treatment of Whitman's homosexuality, but it is a good example of the way he presents evidence in context while resisting the urge to impose contemporary categories on it and to explain his subject into the ground. People of the same gender, in those pre-Freudian days, expressed affection for each other more openly than now; they slept together without necessarily indulging in sex.

That context, and phrenology's distinction between comradely and sexual love, must be borne in mind as you think about Whitman's habit of picking up young workmen on the streets of New York, his tender nursing of wounded soldiers during the Civil War, his celebration of masculine love in "Calamus" and his obsessed pursuit—which appalled even him—of an ex-Confederate soldier turned trolley operator named Peter Doyle, whom he met and fell in love with in Washington. "Diseased disproportionate feverish adhesiveness," he wrote about his love for Doyle in his notebook. And, changing "him" to "her": "Avoid seeing her, or meeting her." The record of his chagrin and discomfiture is there, in the changed pronouns. So is his furious public rejection of the label of homosexual. It is enough to record the contradictions and confusions.

A biographer of Whitman has more important work to do than try to prove conclusively things about Whitman which Whitman himself did not know. To write convincingly about Whitman's setting and context is not, for his biographer, a grace note but an obligation, since Whitman saw his lifelong project, the *Leaves of Grass*, as an expression of his personality amalgamated with time and place. "My 'Leaves,' " he said, "could not possibly have emerged or been fashion'd . . . from any other era than the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, nor any other land than democratic America." Whitman could be, and has been, presented as a poet who intuited all of Eastern mysticism, or a prophetic sort whose real home was with Blake in Paradise, but for Kaplan he is very much a literary nationalist, the first great indigenous poet.

A satisfying biography of Whitman must be as passionately absorbed as was the poet himself by the pageant of America as it left behind the generation of heroes who founded the Republic and moved through the Civil War to an era of cynicism and purposelessness. The subject of this biography, in a densely realized setting of time and place, attends the ceremonies for the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, when Lafayette came to Brooklyn. He feels the shock from the Fulton steamboat explosion. He observes mast-hemmed Manhattan, the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million-footed city. He notes the workmen on the docks, the posture of a horsecart driver, the way somebody leans against the railing of a boat. Whitman's own passion for concrete detail and human variety gives Kaplan great material, allows him to build up a dazzlingly specific portrait of urban life. Whole sections of the city fall and others rise, newspapermen gather for drinks at Pfaff's, Madame Alboni sings at the opera, pedestrians and vehicles crowd the streets, the seagulls wheel over the river; rarely, outside of Whitman's own poetry, has the city been so powerfully evoked.

Whitman's poetry, which also benefits from selective quotation, emerges from this treatment like an old building that has been sandblasted—it looks clean and sparkling, and the peculiar gargoyles which time obliterated have been brought back to prominence. I can hardly imagine a more satisfying literary biography. It is psychologically acute without being tendentiously analytic. It has the narrative density and historical breadth of a novel. It is artful sentence by sentence and in the structure of the whole. Making the best use of Whitman's own optimism and passion for the palpable, it is a buoyant, energizing book.

Furthermore, if Kaplan's achievement as a biographer is understood, *Walt Whitman* should help lead biography away from its stale Freudian assumptions, its increasingly sterile search for the hidden and unconscious and its banal variations on the family romance, toward a more invigorating exploration of the way a person wills himself into being within a vivid arena of time and place. As Kaplan has written elsewhere about the biographer's art: "The real drama of literary biography may have less to do with stalking the naked self to its burrow than with the tensions between the familiar, shared life of human beings . . . and a vision so singular it deserves to be regarded with awe."

In Justin Kaplan, who has also written distinguished biographies of Mark Twain and Lincoln Steffens, America is fortunate to have a biographer whose own art is subtle enough to trace the evasions, mystifications and self-transformations in the lives of its greatest writers. □

Is Joan Crawford Terrible?

BARBARA GRIZZUTI HARRISON

AMERICAN DREAMS: LOST AND FOUND. *By Studs Terkel. Pantheon Books. 507 pp. $14.95.*

There are people who need to be told what everything means, and there are plenty of writers who will be glad to tell them. You know the kind of writer to whom I am referring: he or she is usually an ideologue or a faddist (sometimes it comes to the same thing), and he or she will allow no fact to go uninterpreted, no action to speak for itself or to escape definition, no aspect of human behavior to go unexplained in the light of his or her theories. I myself prefer watching television game shows, but I understand that there is a kind of comfort to be derived from reading books that raise questions only in order to overwhelm the questions with more answers than the questions themselves will support—and I suspect that the same alpha waves that put my brain in neutral when I watch game shows assume ascendancy in the brains of readers who enter the safety of a book that is a writer-invented cosmology.

Reading Studs Terkel is, of course, an entirely different matter. He puts selected facts—the facts of people's lives—before us, and we are obliged to extrapolate the meaning. We are given the raw material of oral history and we are free to concoct our own theories, if we so choose.

I ought to be grateful to Terkel, and indeed I am grateful for the body of his work—for *Division Street, Hard Times* and *Working*. But, at the risk of seeming both churlish and lazy (as well as perverse), I'd be less than honest if I didn't say that there were times when reading *American Dreams*, I longed for a lucid unifying sensibility, for an interpretive intelligence that would tell me—or at least suggest to me—what all this meant. I read part of *American Dreams* on an airplane, and it occurred to me

Barbara Grizzuti Harrison is the author of Visions of Glory: A History and a Memory of Jehovah's Witnesses *(Simon & Schuster) and of* Off Center *(Dial), a collection of essays.*

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that many of Terkel's tape-recorded and edited interviews were not unlike those conversations one overhears in a plane —tantalizing, fragmentary, elliptical, both passionate and abstracted (which may be another way of saying self-absorbed), conceived in the desire or fear or dread of the moment, evanescent.

To ask people—as I assume Terkel did—what they understand the American dream to be, is necessarily to invite answers that are diffuse, self-serving or self-deprecatory, either too pat and glib or too incoherent to lead to illuminating conclusions. It is also inevitably to invite a certain amount of whining, as well as to encourage the cosmeticizing of experience: Is Joan Crawford going to tell us she's a terrible person? For that matter, does Studs Terkel think she's a terrible person? How many hours did he spend with her? Did he accept her answers as given? Did he get underneath her answers ("I love people" . . . "I'm so grateful to my children") with what Gore Vidal calls "the second question"? What does he make of her "mountains of hats," of her saying, "Our nourishment and water come from people who like us, who put their hand out, and say: 'Gee, it's nice to see you' . . . That's our sunshine"? *Did* she sleep on a "pallet on the floor"? You see the problem, one suggested by the title of the book—*American Dreams*, dreams plural. Do a bunch of dreams (hopes, frustrations, aspirations) add up to *an* American dream? Is there such an animal as The American Dream? Does Terkel think there is?

They are valuable, these 100 mini-biographies, for what they tell us about the individuals, celebrated and uncelebrated, Terkel interviewed. They are valuable because all lives are valuable. And they are valuable for a less lofty reason: They allow us to indulge, if not entirely to satisfy, our curiosity about the life of an ex-Klan member, of a Miss U.S.A., of an Arnold Schwarzenegger . . . people whose experiences and values in no way match our own. They are frequently affecting. But I don't . . . well, I don't hear America singing. I don't hear a chorus. I hear disparate voices.

Maybe I'm greedy. I want to know what Terkel makes of this clamor of voices. In his earlier books, which were less sprawling and more thematic, and which lent themselves to an organizing principle, Terkel's unobtrusiveness served his material and his readers well. In *American Dreams*, it is impossible not to notice Terkel's absence. One doesn't, needless to say, wish or require him to ascribe meaning to everything; one wishes only that he had brought his formidable intelligence to bear on the impressive mass of material he has untiringly collected—as, for example, Ronald Blythe, who might be called the poet of oral history, did in *The View in Winter: Reflections on Old Age*. Blythe's own voice never overwhelmed the voices of those whom he interviewed; it underscored them, and it cast light, sometimes harsh, sometimes luminous, upon their lives. I want more light from Terkel. The I-am-a-camera (or I-am-a-tape-recorder) approach Terkel is deservedly admired for seems, for once, flimsy, almost ungenerous.

"Something's happening," Terkel tells us in his brief Prologue,

> as yet unrecorded on the social seismograph. There are signs, unmistakable, of an astonishing increase in the airing of grievances: of private wrongs and public rights. [What does that mean, exactly, "private wrongs and public rights"?] The heralds are from all sorts of precincts: a family farmer, a blue-collar wife, a whistle-blowing executive. In unexpected quarters, those, hitherto quiescent, are finding voice. . . . In a society and time with changes so stunning and landscapes so suddenly estranged, the last communiqués are not yet in. The eighties may differ from the seventies by a quantum leap. [In what way may they differ; and how will this change come about? By the airing of grievances? Is that likely?] In this book . . . there is . . . a recognition of possibility.

Well—I'm somewhat at a loss. Terkel is sanguine; he believes in progress. That's part of his appeal. But I'm not entirely sure what his great expectations are built upon.

Miss U.S.A., 1973: "If I could sit down with every young girl in America for the next fifty years, I could tell them what I liked about the pageant, I could tell them what I hated. It wouldn't make any difference."

Wallace Rasmussen, chief executive officer of Beatrice Foods in Chicago, winner of the Horatio Alger Award: "People are now so used to being given something for nothing. . . . It comes down to—who's gonna be the survivor. . . . It will be every community for itself. . . . If you're going to be successful, you can't let any person stand in the way."

Dan O'Brien, 57, married, six chil-

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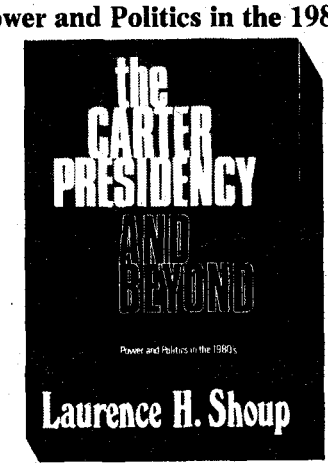

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dren, an out-of-work executive: "Our society has reserved success for the young. . . . When [my sons] were growing up, I was president of a company and everybody was talking about me. Now, what the hell's happened to the old guy?"

Not all the voices in *American Dreams* are so downbeat, or so cynical, as those I've just quoted. There are the voices of new and old immigrants who still believe—in the teeth of the evidence—that America is the land where dreams come true; and there are voices of men and women who look back upon long, hard lives—lives spent in organizing labor unions, or in industry, or lives spent scrabbling for survival—and count it all worthwhile. There are contrapuntal voices: A 25-year-old man, once a child model, for whom the dream is "the attitude you see in the movies of the thirties and forties. Where people don't even have to lock their doors, you know all the neighbors, and the milkman, friendly"; and Jill Robinson, the daughter of producer Dore Schary, saying coolly, ironically, incisively: Hollywood "was feudal. . . . You looked at humans as property." There were stars, and there was the rest of the world, and the rest of the world consisted of "extras."

It is in fact quite astonishing how many of the people in this book use the movies as their point of reference: Ted Turner, owner of the Atlanta Braves, "featured [himself] as maybe a modern-day Rhett Butler." A professor of American history, denied tenure, wishes he were Randolph Scott, compares his town to that in *The Last Picture Show* and feels that the gates of the Emerald City have been closed to him. And on and on. Half the world wants to be Scarlett O'Hara or John Wayne.

The half of the world that is female seems to have a firmer grasp on reality than the half of the world that is male, at least to this extent: the women interviewed appear to be much more conscious of what their male partners were doing—conscious of their struggles, their heroism, their flaws—than the men are of what their women were doing. It's difficult to read this book without coming to the conclusion that women ponder the daily realities of men's lives (while engaged in their own struggle for survival) while most men choose not to see or to understand the realities of women's lives.

Perhaps in comparing men to women in this way, I am guilty of overstatement, of unwarranted generalization. But that is precisely why I need Studs Terkel to help me. Did he see this as well? Did the questions he asked elicit this kind of response? What does he know that he's not telling us? And here is another question for Studs Terkel: Why is there such a decidedly secular emphasis in almost all of the oral histories in *American Dreams*? Did Terkel ask the people with whom he talked what part, if any, religious belief played in their dreams? I ask, as Miss Marple once said, only because I want to know.

I do know this. While there are people in this book whose dreams are shoddy, tacky, flimflam, there are also hardy, good souls who are able to transcend their own experience, to put their experience in perspective: one loves them.

Jenny Bird, 43, has looked for happiness—and work—in Australia, Detroit, Los Angeles. She says, "If we had been a peaceful people, we would have felt other peaceful people, but because we were all unhappy, we only felt the unhappiness of other people. You're just seeing a reflection of yourself. So everything that we saw looked bad. We were fighting all the time. We thought the whole country was like that. We never had any trouble with black people or white people. We only had trouble with ourselves."

And there are voices that remind us of Archibald MacLeish's axiom that a poem should not mean, but be. Norman Maclean, professor emeritus, University of Chicago: "I was the first person in [my] family not to make his living with his hands. . . . They were all carpenters. . . . I think the most beautiful parts of human beings are the hands of certain men and women. I can't keep my eyes off them. I was brought up to believe that hands were the instruments of the mind." We do not need Terkel to underscore those words, or to improve upon them, or to explain them. Nobody could. There they are on the page—noble and proper. To read them—and others like them—is to understand the very great debt we owe Studs Terkel.

Still, it is possible to acknowledge our debt to Terkel . . . and yet to wish for more. Andy Johnson, 81, came to America from Finland in 1906. "I see a wonderful future for humanity," he says, "or the end of it." Which is it? Is it the best of times, or the worst of times? Is it the best of times *and* the worst of times? Will Studs Terkel—

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Studs Terkel the writer, not the talk-show personality—ever come out of his closet and admit us to the recesses of his mind? Will he quit teasing us with bromides about "the recognition of possibility"? What does he think, feel, surmise, about the humanity contained in his latest book? □

Fondling the Details

J. D. O'HARA

LECTURES ON LITERATURE. *By Vladimir Nabokov. Edited by Fredson Bowers. Introduction by John Updike. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 385 pp. $19.95.*

"Let us not kid ourselves; let us remember that literature is of no practical value whatsoever, except in the very special case of somebody's wishing to become, of all things, a professor of literature."

The speaker—Vladeemir Nabahkov—was himself a p. of l. at the time, but quite unintentionally. Life had prepared him for better worlds. He was born in Russia, into a family and society that had been historically important for generations. ("I had a perfectly normal trilingual childhood.") His admirable liberal father supported the revolution against the Czar and took part in Kerensky's brief regime, after which the Bolsheviks harried the Nabokovs out of Russia. In Berlin, Nabokov's father was killed by right-wing thugs seeking someone else. Before he left for that fatal meeting, a daughter had mended his clothes. "Such a waste of time," she sighed years later. "Just think of sewing a button on for such a short time." The widow spent her last years in Prague and poverty. Her simple life there was rather pleasant, she remarked: there was no need, as there had once been, to decide which of a hundred hats she should wear. Young Nabokov went to Cambridge University. He attended all his classes, he claimed, but never went to the library because he had soccer practice. In short, family oddities, world events and his own unworldly nature combined to prepare him for better worlds.

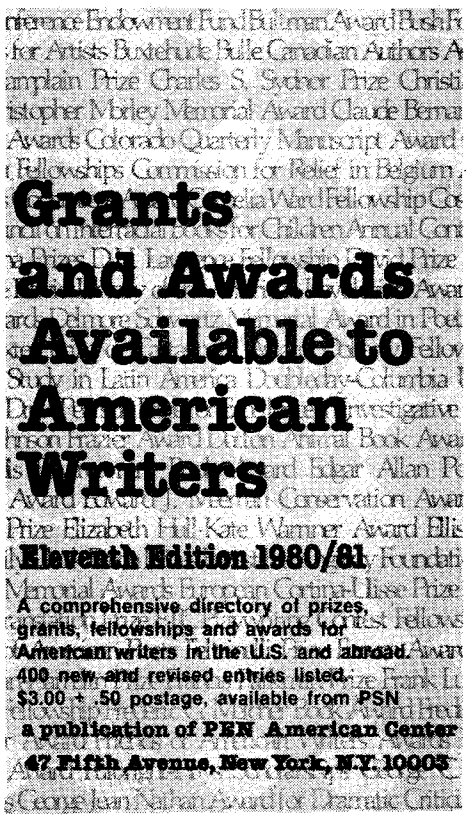
"An original author always invents an original world. . . . There is no such thing as real life for an author of genius: he must create it himself and then create the consequences."

The blossoming bilingual writer fled with his wife and child to the United States and to academia—as a researcher in lepidoptera at Harvard. Then Wellesley lured him into teaching Russian, and then suggested that he teach a course in literature. It was an offer the writer could easily refuse. But his wife, Véra, urged him to accept and offered to write the lectures herself.

And now we can attend some of those lectures. No, not those by Mrs. Nabokov. As she once told me, just a bit tartly, her husband changed this and that passage over the years (first at Wellesley and then at Cornell) until not a word of the original remained. Later, he professed himself reluctant to publish these rewritten lectures until he could catch up on the scholarship and bring them up to date. He never did this. What is reproduced here, therefore, comes from the texts that he read to his classes. (To his dismay, Cornell rejected his proposal that the lectures be taped and played by the college radio station.) They are accompanied by reproductions of sample pages from his books and notes. These show him drawing the bugged Georg Samsa, correcting bad translations, mapping the Samsas' apartment and the wanderings of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, and—touchingly, for the greatest American author of our century—reminding himself how to pronounce our language. For readers who get caught up in the semester's work, the text ends with several pages of exam questions. This semester's course focuses on Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Gustave Flaubert, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust and R. L. Stevenson (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*). The Russians are coming, but not till next year.

This quarantine of the Russians, says editor Fredson Bowers, is "for the convenience of readers." He says other funny things, too, as when he tries to describe the MSS. of the lectures: "Ordinarily the handwritten pages give every indication of rough initial composition, and as a result Nabokov might work them over extensively, not only during the first writing-out but also on

J. D. O'Hara teaches at the University of Connecticut.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review, when on some occasions he further revised both style and content." ("I am averse to distinguishing content from form," Nabokov says.) Bowers plays several editorial games with his texts: at one point, for instance, two pages of a lecture are missing, breaking the lecture off in mid-paragraph. After the break it begins again in mid-sentence . . . and Bowers prints that as the end of the paragraph begun three pages before. But readers of *Pale Fire* will enjoy comparing editors Bowers and Kinbote. ("It would be pedantic in the extreme to try to transcribe the texts *literatum* in every detail," writes Bowers. A true pedant, such as Kinbote, would omit the redundant last phrase and spell *literatim* correctly . . . and, in thanking Mrs. Nabokov, would get her name right.)

"In reading, one should notice and fondle details. There is nothing wrong about the moonshine of generalization when it comes *after* the sunny trifles of the book have been lovingly collected."

Well, we may have been collecting trifles a trifle too shady. Nabokov's lectures are fine—specific, detailed and admirably deferential to the texts and authors. To be sure, he is willing to pass judgment. About Molly Bloom's soliloquy, which generated so many tedious pages of bad imitation from John Updike and others, he remarks: "Readers are unduly impressed by the stream-of-thought device." Commenting on the style of a passage in *Ulysses*, he compares it to that of *Finnegans Wake,* "one of the greatest failures in literature."

But he praises more often, and explains, and takes the writing seriously, page by page, image by image. His discussions of Flaubert and Proust, especially, constitute the admirable fondling of details that he recommends. A very few of his interpretations—of the character of Gregor in Kafka's *Metamorphosis,* for instance, and of the man in the mackintosh in *Ulysses*—are wrong, dammitall, *wrong* . . . and the lectures are so immediate and human that one really longs for a chance to argue with the lecturer. But not often. Usually one wishes only to read happily on, grateful for all remarks and listening to quotations with a double interest when Nabokov is also in the audience.

The lectures are written for American students, not real ones, so they are written in a very clear and simple style—for Nabokov. But he does not *always* restrain himself. He concludes one bit of plot summary by saying, "And presently Emma and Rodolph come back from their ride—with a smile on the face of the author." (One imagines a few earnest note-takers distracted for a moment by a tune not quite recognizable.) And in explaining the political circumstances of the "real" world outside *Mansfield Park*, Nabokov describes our Embargo Act of 1807. He concludes: "If you read *embargo* backwards, you get 'O grab me.' "

The book is sadly expensive. Few teachers will be able to buy it and steal from it. But it is a lot cheaper than a college course. And look at the teacher! At the age of 10 he was patted on the head by Leo Tolstoy. In Paris he knew Joyce and played chess with Marcel Duchamp. There is a startling moment in his Kafka lecture when, finishing off a biographical passage, he says: "In those last years of his short life . . . he had a happy love affair and lived with his mistress in Berlin, in 1923, not far from me."

And yet this teacher has even greater claims on our attention! This is seldom true of teachers. □

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and sorrows to see how much she could stand without cracking." To Linda, Robin is a leftover responsibility to be deposited with relatives in Iowa, a stranger whose principal form of communication is the shrug. To Robin, her nervous and barely known stepmother is merely "an asshole." The prospect of the two of them setting out on a cross-country journey seems bleak, at best.

It is—and yet, the author knows where she is going. Hilma Wolitzer, whose two previous novels (*Ending* and *In the Flesh*) have earned her a growing critical recognition and a mini-cult of fiction fans, creates in *Hearts* a feeling of compulsion that seems to ensnare the reader against his will. It is similar to the trancelike spell cast by Joyce Carol Oates in *Wonderland*, but is even more surprising in its effectiveness. The bizarre elements of personality and circumstance that Oates highlights are purposely muted by Wolitzer, who goes for a more difficult dramatic effect by insisting on the essential ordinariness of the characters' surroundings and their initial rote responses to them.

The landscape against which the two disparate females' travel unfolds is a drab if wryly perceived American dream of disconsolation, as in the recurring litany of the familiar motels: "The Carioca," "Buddy's Siesta," "The Dutchboy" (where the furniture "seemed scaled to children or dwarves") and "The Applegate Arms" (which has "the kind of shabbiness Linda found appealing"). We are also given the inevitable junk food of contemporary interstate journeying: "the revolting pink edge of her half-eaten hamburger," the tuna, chicken and turkey sandwiches in dispensing machines that "would all taste pretty much the same, slick with mayonnaise and a little fishy," and the fare at the Ah Mee Chinese restaurant in Guthrie, Oklahoma, where "the chow mein had the consistency of worms in the rain."

There is a lulling, almost hypnotic quality to the cultural monotony, so relentless in its mediocrity that even the women's room graffiti is "ordinary." Linda, with forced bravado, speaks in clichés, uselessly telling her teen companion, "You eat a lot of unhealthy snack food," while Robin continues to shrug.

Against this backdrop the travelers suffer a series of disappointments and defeats. Linda unexpectedly finds she is pregnant by her late husband because her IUD had fallen out, and in the midst of her attempted abortion at a clinic in Des Moines, the place is raided by Pro-Life zealots and the procedure, she later discovers, was never completed. The Iowa farm where Linda hopes to leave Robin in idyllic rural peace and health has just been sold to a housing developer, and the ailing, bigoted old folks are off to a condo in Dubuque. Linda takes Robin on to the real mother who deserted her as a baby, only to interrupt the runaway parent and her current husband at their Arizona home during Sunday afternoon lovemaking in matching bathrobes. Robin says she wouldn't live there "for a hundred million dollars" and stabs a pastry when her "natural" mother tenders an obligatory invitation for her to stay.

But out of all the adversity—perhaps due to their survival of it—Linda and Robin gain in strength and character. When Robin angrily rejects her mother's grudging offer, the girl's "face was deeply flushed and her hair was a crackling halo of light." There have been other isolated but accumulating "cracklings" of light from the overall gloom. Linda has decided to have the baby, and has drawn relief and composure from her choice. There are times when she is "stung with happiness." She is not about to discard the often-rejected Robin: the two of them have come to support and appreciate each other in their respective plights. At a happily gluttonous meal during their first stop in California, Linda realizes that she and Robin are now traveling *together*, with a sense of mutual trust and human sharing:

> Why am I talking so much, Linda wondered, and decided it was to avoid speaking the unspeakable. It was because she could not say aloud that she was *bound* to Robin, that you can become a family by the grace of accident and will, that we have a duty to console one another as best we can.

The revelation is all the more powerful because it comes convincingly from a character who at the beginning of her journey would have seemed incapable of it. Wolitzer persuades us that seemingly "ordinary people" with the cards stacked against them can transcend the tawdry circumstances fate inflicts on them. We are rooting for them as the once mute Robin rises to the high spirits of her companion at their ketchup-smeared feast with a simple declaration of survival and triumph: "'We're here!' Robin said, and they were."

As they drive on after their "splurge" of a meal toward the end of their

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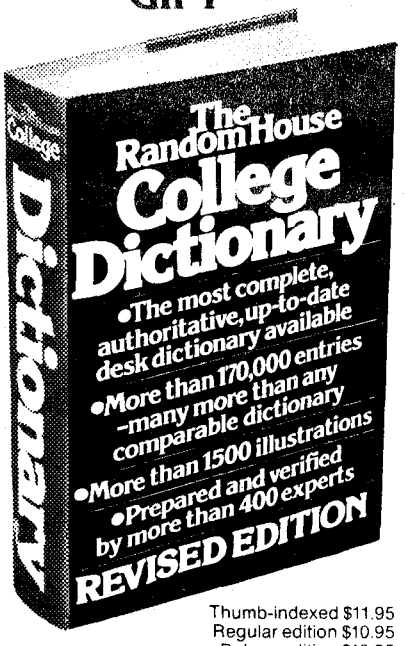
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journey, with full hearts as well as stomachs, Wolitzer writes:

> There had to be some scientific explanation for the blueness of the air; smog, the onset of evening, some chemical balance of heat and moisture and light. Linda's right foot pressed the accelerator and her left was braced against the floor of the Maverick, but she believed she was dancing.

So did I. □

Portrait of a Lady

ROGER ROSENBLATT

ALICE JAMES: A BIOGRAPHY. *By Jean Strouse. Houghton Mifflin Company. 384 pp. $15.*

Jean Strouse shows several critical gifts in this biography, not the least of which is technical: she can combine human feeling and intellectual history in the same paragraph, sometimes in the same sentence, without losing the force of either element, or making it seem that each is near the other for mutual compensation. That particular gift comes in handy for this first full-length study of Alice James, since the heart of William and Henry's enigmatic baby sister is not to be grasped outside her world and times. Yet Alice was no mover and shaker in her world—no mute inglorious Emily Dickinson, nor even a household muse to her brothers. Instead, she was the girl in everyone's English class (you remember?), the one who used to make those astonishing Chinese observations and lightning wisecracks, that same girl who wore so poorly in the long run, who seemed at the tenth reunion (dare you think it?) a little dull.

So: "Why Alice James?" That is Strouse's exploratory question in the book's introduction. She concludes that it is her subject's "attempt to find something whole and authentic in her own experience that gives her life its real stature and interest." Yes and no. We see a girl struggling for authenticity and stature, of course. (In the James family no other struggles were possible.) But what also gives her life real stature and interest is that it may only be understood from the outside. Her struggles too may only be understood from the outside. Oh, you can imagine the fire down below. But what you see essentially is the woman of the photographs—the tidy body swathed in drapes, with hair strung tight as a violin. That, and Henry's pointless face.

Yet the outside perspective is exactly right. Outside is where Alice lived—outside romance and marriage; outside great literary achievement; outside physical well-being. The temper of her intelligence was also outside: reactive, critical, bitchy. In an entry of her diary, inevitably her major work, she commented on an anecdote from Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography*: "H. S. one day in talking to Huxley said that the only thing to hope for was to make a little mark before one died, to which Huxley—'Oh, no matter about the mark, if one only gives a shove.' At first it makes Huxley seem the bigger animal of the two, which he is, no doubt, but surely Herbert restores the balance by repeating it to his own advantage, if he doesn't make it tip a little thro' the superior weight of voluntary virtue over spontaneous." All her critical gifts are evident in that diary entry, in their limited abundance.

For most people such gifts would be plenty. For Alice any intellectual showings whatever might have seemed inadequate, since they were bound to be attacked by the suspicion that there had to be more to the James girl than met the eye. Alice was the Branwell Brontë of her family. What he was supposed to have thrown away through dissipation, she was supposed to have lost in the wars with her nerves. But whoever knows? Among families of geniuses the one who accomplishes the least is often credited with having the greatest potentialities, as if the rest of the family were telling the world: you cannot imagine how infinitely talented we are. The child becomes a family secret, an oracle, a court dwarf. In Alice's case, she was alternately coddled and scrutinized.

No wonder, then, this explosion of discovery as she reflected upon her first trip to Europe: "Imagine the bliss of finding that I too was a 'sensitive.' " There may be more difficult places for finding oneself than in the family of the Jameses, but they are hard to picture. Here, after all, was the great family of "sensitives," of watchers and noters; they could not help themselves. As the one little girl in their company (there were four brothers), Alice was born to be the center of various forms of attention, including the tricky half-sexual teasing and bantering that passes for brotherly love. The question that quietly dogged her life was: How important am I?—a question made especially urgent in a time when every "sensitive" woman was asking it.

Strouse knows exactly how important Alice was. Only a biographer with a superb sense of proportion could have done so good a job with this life, because with the Alices and Branwells there is always the temptation to exaggerate claims. One mark of Strouse's sense of her subject (and of her self-confidence) is that she allows Alice to enter her story late, so that the rest of the family already crowds the frame by the time Alice tries to find breathing room (i.e., the story of her life). Instead of growing up from childhood, "Alice in a sense stopped." The story Strouse gives us is *why* she stopped.

Part of the reason was her ill health. Like other Victorian ladies, Alice was "delicate," the word in those times suggesting everything from beauty to

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tuberculosis. As Strouse points out, frailty, even illness itself, was a sign of beauty, so it may be that Alice unconsciously opted for one in order to imply the other. At the end of her life cancer limited her options. But as a younger woman it seems as if Alice actively embraced her neurasthenia, her bouts of "nerves" and the languor that went with them. In this she was abetted by the quackery of the period, and of course by the going presumption that a woman's pallor was fitting for a life of no consequence.

Such presumptions about the proper ambitions of women may have also helped to "stop" Alice. Yet one feels that had she had a mind to give life a Huxley shove, no custom would have kept her down. More than anything external, Alice stopped Alice—perhaps so as never to have to test her grown-up capabilities, or perhaps because as an ungrown-up, she could be most dearly loved. Alice could do without fame and achievement, but for the fifth child who always wondered if there was enough love (and brain power) in the family to go around, stopping at childhood might have seemed a good strategy.

In fact she was loved—by William, like an uncle; by Henry, like a best friend, or like a husband in a marriage of true minds. She was also wholeheartedly admired: by William Dean Howells and a few others who were devoted to her. Still, she wrote that she had always felt dead. She may have believed that she had actually died in childhood, that the remaining years were superfluous, like a ghost's. She looked like a ghost, after all. She had the manner of a ghost. If her life had really "stopped" early on, she would not have had to suffer it like Pope's "long disease." Her feelings of prior death might have been an odd form of nostalgia for the time before it became clear to her that she had no place to go in the world. Yet she resisted death too. Her diary was proof of her resistance, and so was her general detachment, which was a way of holding out for the real Alice James, who had to be there somewhere, who had to be someone other than her brothers' sister, or another phthisic sigh.

In the end she won out, since the woman who emerges from this story is Alice James and no one else. That is what Jean Strouse would have us appreciate. And as a result of her first-class biography, we do. □

THEATER

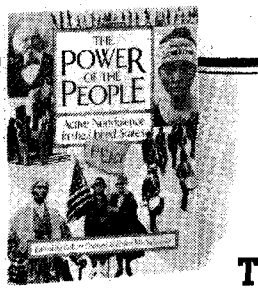
JULIUS NOVICK

Brigadoon
The Diviners
Album

Though Rodgers and Hammerstein believed that they were inventing a new form of theater, the "musical play," what they were really doing was giving old-fashioned romantic operetta a new lease on life. They diminished the pomposity and the attitudinizing; they raised the plausibility level and lowered the cliché quotient (somewhat); they added a carefully measured dollop of "seriousness," and they topped off the whole thing with the folk-ballet choreography of Agnes de Mille. But the picturesque locales with their choruses of youths and maidens, the sentimental love stories and, above all, the lush melodies for "legit" voices, place *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* squarely in the tradition of Sigmund Romberg (for whom, earlier in his career, Hammerstein had written lyrics).

It was the success of Rodgers and Hammerstein that opened the way for Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, the most prominent of their disciples, to succeed with *Brigadoon* in 1947, four years after *Oklahoma!* And now, following last season's Broadway revival of *Oklahoma!*, *Brigadoon* has returned in a splendid production (at the Majestic Theater). What a pleasure it is to have it back! *Brigadoon* is unmistakably an operetta: kitsch, of course, but inspired kitsch.

As an escape fantasy, *Brigadoon* is nothing if not explicit. Two Americans, Tommy (the sensitive one) and Jeff (the funny one), are hiking in the Scottish Highlands when they stumble on a village that is not on any map. It turns out that time stopped for Brigadoon in the eighteenth century, when, by a "miracle," it vanished into the mist, thenceforth to be accessible from the outside world for only one day every hundred years (our time). Of course, Tommy falls in love with a Brigadoon girl, and there is an agonized parting before he changes his mind and decides to stay in Brigadoon forever, to be happy with his Fiona, where the hurly-burly of the modern world will never touch him again. As a fantasy, it has its appeal.



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In spite of the conscientious "ayes" and "dinnas" in Lerner's dialogue, the folkish strains that crop up in Loewe's music (there is even a live bagpiper), the flings and reels of de Mille's choreography and the elaborate array of plaids in Stanley Simmons's costumes, there is room for doubt as to the authentic Scottishness of *Brigadoon*. The historical reality of Scotland is gaunt and dire; *Brigadoon* is pretty and sweet. There is one misfit in the village—dark, unstable, violent—like pore Jud in *Oklahoma!*; he wants to get out. But everyone else just loves it. There is no trace of poverty or hardship. Under the Scottish trimmings, Brigadoon is a conventionally picturesque operetta village, populated by conventional singing and dancing peasants.

And yet, as the mist onstage gradually clears, as the lights come up and the tempo of the singing quickens, Brigadoon is revealed before us in the middle of market day, and it would take a hard heart not to rejoice; like all good shows, this one makes a compelling world of its own. The scenery for this revival was designed by Michael J. Hotopp and Paul de Pass, and consists mainly of several craggy, mossy, heathery set pieces, pleasingly three-dimensional and steep, that join, separate and recombine in new arrangements before our eyes. The parting of Tommy and Fiona, as his crag slides off stage right and hers slides off stage left, is a memorably graphic moment of boy-loses-girl.

Lerner's libretto has an agreeable spookiness about it; like that other work of Scottish supernaturalism, *Macbeth* (also written by a non-Scotsman), it suggests that on those wild hills, in those deep glens, mysterious things can happen. De Mille's choreography retains its innocent charms. In the current cast, Martin Vidnovic as Tommy is more of an individual, and less of an Arrow collar ad than romantic baritones were permitted to be when *Brigadoon* was new; he has a kind of strength and energy that is more than you expect in this role, but not more than it can contain. Meg Bussert, a more conventional personality, is a delicate and graceful Fiona. And both of them can really sing.

Above all, it is Frederick Loewe's music that draws us into the world of *Brigadoon*, that makes the love of Tommy and Fiona seem for the moment so terribly important. The big songs—"The Heather on the Hill," "It's

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Almost Like Being in Love," "From This Day On"—are squarely in the Romberg-Rodgers tradition: pure romantic operetta, ardent and irresistible. *Brigadoon* seems old-fashioned today because of the directness of its appeal to the emotions; nobody today in the Age of Cool can write anything like it. Which is all the more reason to cherish this revival.

A strange 14-year-old boy named Buddy is phobic about water, but he can find it with a dowsing rod, and he always knows when a storm is coming on. A young man called C. C. who used to be a preacher shows up in town and goes to work for Buddy's father. C. C. has a gift for making people pay attention to him; he and Buddy become friends. He tries to cure the boy's fear of water, and instead causes his death by drowning. Jim Leonard Jr., author of *The Diviners*, has a convincing grasp of time and place—a hamlet in southern Indiana during the Depression—an interesting American Gothic imagination and a capacity for making something distinctive, even eloquent, out of the way country people talk. His play is the first offering of the season at the Circle Repertory, that little temple of "lyric realism," and it is finely acted by Timothy Shelton as C. C. and Robert MacNaughton as Buddy.

Yet some significant things are wrong with *The Diviners*. It is too long, as if the author were only too well aware of how beautifully he writes. Some of its elements have a familiar ring from other American small-town writings. And we never discover why it is so important to C. C. not to be a preacher again, though the last of his repeated refusals brings on the play's catastrophe. *The Diviners* feels unfinished, not quite brought into focus.

Still, this is an impressive play. There is a saying that poets are young at 16, novelists at 26, playwrights at 36. Jim Leonard Jr. is a playwright of unmistakable talent, with a true voice of his own, at the age of 24.

Album, by David Rimmer (at the Cherry Lane Theater), is an entertaining little comedy, not too condescending, not too sentimental, about four nice American teen-agers growing up horny to the strains of the Beach Boys, the Beatles and Bob Dylan. Under Joan Micklin Silver's direction, it is performed by Kevin Bacon, Keith Gordon, Jan Leslie Harding and Jenny Wright with plenty of adolescent energy, antsiness and charm. It is interesting to note that the heartwarming moments in *Album* come when the kids finally manage to "go all the way"—not, as in old-fashioned comedies about teenagers, when they are saved from it in the nick of time. □

FILMS

ROBERT HATCH

Every Man for Himself
Loulou

If I were to review a novel primarily in terms of its format, remarking on the selection of typeface, admiring or deploring the title page, you might decide that I, or the author and his publisher, had strayed rather far from the province of fiction. Except for occasional abstract and purely visual projects, movies are also fictions. Yet in his latest work, *Every Man for Himself*, Jean-Luc Godard seems to force on the viewer a response not unlike that described above. The analogy is inexact because the physical presence of a movie is intrinsic to its worth, whereas for a novel that factor is incidental. Even more than the theater, film is both a visual and a narrative art: if the available technology is not used with skill and imagination, the venture will hardly succeed.

What Godard does, however, in his current demanding, compelling and disturbing picture is oblige us to penetrate the technique in an attempt to grasp the content. He never allows us to become so absorbed in his people as to forget his craft; you do not see the cameras or the cranes, the lights or the microphones, but their presence is palpable. This emphasis on film making as an intricate and fragile illusion, on the craftiness as well as the craftsmanship, is enforced in various ways. For one, the central character (there are three) is Paul Godard, a man of 30 or so who works in Swiss television. He is at odds with himself, with his work, his women and his times; one senses in him energy at bay.

Now it happens that Jacques Dutronc, who plays the role, looks a good deal like a younger version of Jean-Luc Godard, and the cigar that is perpetually in his hand is the one to be seen in a

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current photograph of the director. Further, Godard exiled himself in Grenoble at a time, a few years back, when he felt himself unwelcome in the movie world of Paris and unable to work as he had before. And in a recent *New York Times* interview with Annette Insdorf he admitted an inability to form stable relationships with women. With these parallels in my mind, Dutronc seemed to be Jean-Luc Godard, in transparent disguise, stalking morosely through his own work in progress.

In addition, the film's structure calls insistent attention to itself. It is "composed" (Godard's word) of four parts—The Imaginary, Fear, Commerce and Music—which as best I could tell overlap in time and within each of which the flow of time is at least irregular. And quite frequently Godard introduces stop-motion photography to call analytic attention to moments so fleeting that their weight might not otherwise be felt. Though I was not always able to grasp the gravity of the passage thus dissected, I appreciated the esthetic effectiveness of breaking the illusion to sharpen the perceptions. It is like salt on the tongue. The music is sometimes incongruous, and on occasion people hark to it when none is to be heard.

One stares through these and similar devices as, walking rapidly, one stares through a picket fence to understand the action beyond. And when I did so, it became apparent that the people I saw were communicating, to the extent that they could, through the pickets of their dissonant emotions and cross-purposes. The other two principals are Denise (Nathalie Baye), who, having ceased to work and live with Paul, has gone to the country in search of a satisfying occupation that she cannot quite define, and Isabelle (Isabelle Huppert), who has arrived in the city to enter commerce as a whore. She is formidable at her trade, meeting the erotic humiliations of her clients with impassive contempt. Each of them is a business big shot, and it is in these passages that Godard reaffirms his political views, the analogy between lechery and trade being rather baldly proposed.

Paul, Denise and Isabelle are the permanent elements of a kaleidoscopic triangle through which other persons come and go, constantly changing the color and texture of the revolving scene. Among them are Paul's former wife and teen-age daughter, and when they are in view, the movement slows and darkens, as though all hope of meeting across the frontiers of personal autonomy are being lost. In Godard's hands, thus, the techniques of film making are put forward as a metaphor for the prevailing conditions of contemporary life—the cutting and splicing, the search for new angles of vision, the unreliability of time, the force of juxtaposition and the treachery of illusion. *Every Man for Himself* is repeatedly surprising, often of startling beauty, hard to keep in focus, enticing and evasive. It is funny and bitter, gay at moments, basically skeptical and, overall, sad. The people it examines are for the most part enterprising but vulnerable, clear-eyed but wrongheaded. One's instinct is to reach out to comfort or shake them, but Godard has thrown a screen of distracting ingenuities across the screen.

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It is a parable for an age that has seen too much, learned too little and is now post almost everything. *Every Man for Himself* is a devilish good picture.

It is a melancholy fact of life that certain otherwise sensible women find themselves, perhaps from an excess of libido, irresistibly attracted to studs. (The same phenomenon, with the sex roles reversed, can also be observed.) Maurice Pialat's *Loulou* is a Paris neighborhood chronicle of one such liaison. It features Isabelle Huppert and Gerard Depardieu, and is competently done—that is, the characters are developed at some depth and the milieu is strongly evoked. Huppert's Nelly is considerably more put upon than is her Isabelle in Godard's film, the difference being, perhaps, that in *Every Man* she is selling sex and in *Loulou* she is buying it. It seems that for this commodity there is always a seller's market. Depardieu, an eloquent actor, makes Loulou vividly awful—unkempt, sodden, brutish and, except presumably between the sheets, achingly boring.

The movie's action derives from a triangular struggle, Nelly's husband (Guy Marchand) providing the third party. He is a small-business man who, baffled by his wife's sluttish escapade, sacrifices what little dignity remains to him in sudden rages. Nelly becomes pregnant; Loulou vows to take a job, safe in the knowledge that no prudent employer will give him one; she gets an abortion; he slouches off on his rounds. It is predictable and all too believable. I felt depressed to no great purpose. □

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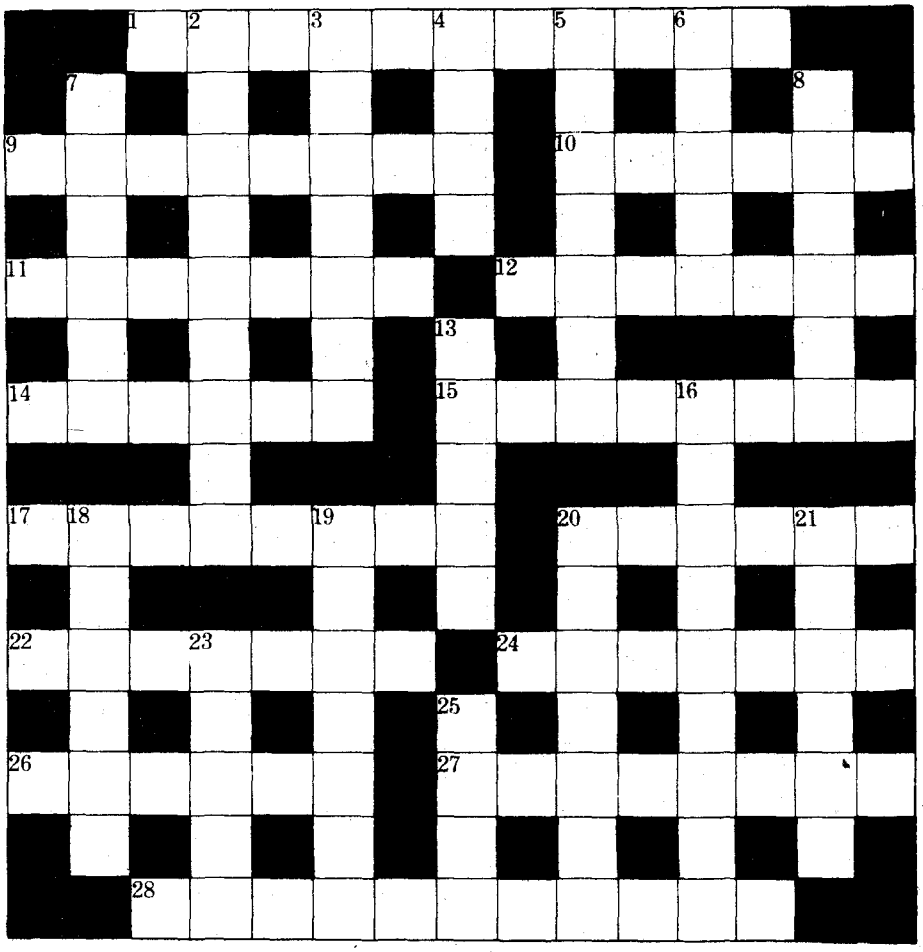

ACROSS

1 Strangely enough, Pirates meet in New York. (6,5)
9 and 25 down Delivery of letters here, in proper fashion, temporarily taking the place of buzzers. (8,4)
10 Numbers should follow the follower of this going out. (6)
11 Half-a-shake! Was Noah's son responsible for such language? (7)
12 One is supposed to be from the borough. (7)
14 One book after another! (6)
15 Discerns what Lothario says he does. (5,3)
17 Circles of 27, possibly. (8)
20 Having some trouble with color, but still put on a pedestal. (6)
22 Each are upset, and that hurts! (7)
24 Minor injuries might be brought into line, especially with a uniform on. (7)
26 Reputedly happy, it certainly isn't rare to find a caller of some spirit. (6)
27 Understood only by a few 17, in a way. (8)
28 The atmosphere of the city should be good, at least. (6,5)

DOWN

2 It takes a lot to make the tumult die out. (9)
3 OK this way? (7)
4 Breakfast food for which more than one container is recommended. (4)
5 and 16 One reason why the doe waits at the watering place, as Harry said. (3,4,5,4)
6 A simple fastening, although when very short, worthless. (5)
7 One of those things going around providing music for such as Shakespeare. (6)
8 Rub the wrong way, getting what some foreigners have to drink in the office. (6)
13 What Paris was worth, as one might gather. (5)
16 See 5 down
18 Shifting gear on an old engine of war. (6)
19 In a buzz, an animal might be not like us. (7)
20 What the abbot's helper claimed to be independently valid. (1,6)
21 An occasional blinker. (6)
23 Is bidding this final? (5)
25 See 9 across

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1841

ACROSS: 1 Past perfect; 9, 10 and 11 Stab in the back; 12 Bedroom; 13 Amalgam; 15 and 16 Emerging nation; 18 Physic; 21 Tuberose; 24 Sniping; 26 Strokes; 28, 29 and 30 Take a back seat; 31 Bear witness. DOWN: 2 Ambergris; 3 Tripoli; 4 Eats; 5 Freeman; 6 Cabal; 7 Stream; 8 Octavo; 14 Agate; 17 Tortoises; 19 Hangar; 20 Centaur; 22 Betoken; 23 Seesaw; 25 Piece; 27 Taxi.

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But I don't understand. Wouldn't that be helping them do their work?

Oh, no. You see, under the present classification system the Government does the spies' work for them. Now our secrets are labeled according to their importance—Top Secret, for the really big stuff, down to Confidential, for small-potatoes secrets. In the Spy Library, the foreign agents would have to figure out for themselves what's important.

I see. Do you have any other ideas like that?

Oh sure. All the time. My Swiss missile bank, for example. It would solve the problem of stationing U.S. missiles in Europe. We'd deposit them in Swiss bank accounts, and the trusty Swiss bankers would hide them in various Alps. As everybody knows, you can trust a Swiss banker to keep a secret. So the Europeans wouldn't have to worry about missiles on their soil and the Soviet Union wouldn't feel threatened.

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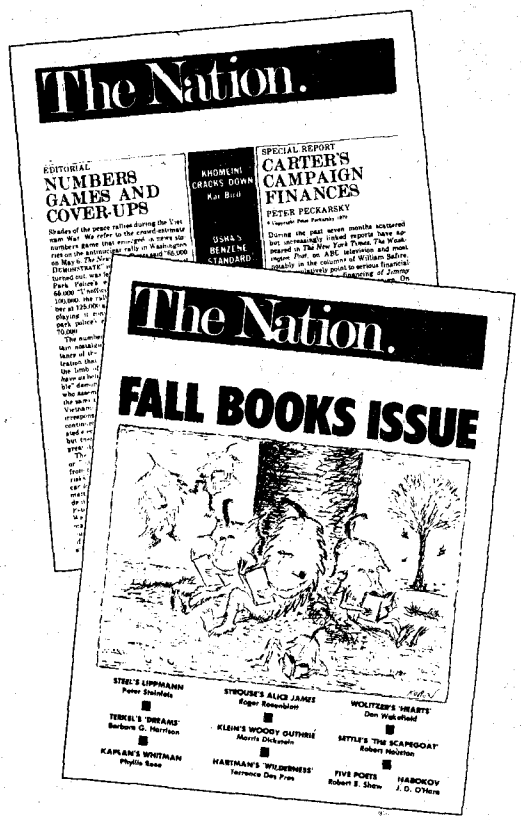
My friend, it's a mad world. Sometimes the most outrageous ideas make more sense than what our Government is selling. Take the MX missile. Only Alfred E. Neuman could have dreamed that one up. Most of the time, though, I just try to make sense out of the world as it comes. And if *you* subscribe to *The Nation*, maybe you can too. Just fill out that handy coupon over on the right.



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